Pauline Frommer's

HAWAII

SPEND LESS SEE MORE™

1st Edition

by Joan Conrow, Lesa Griffith,
and David Thompson

Series Editor: Pauline Frommer

WILEY
Wiley Publishing, Inc.

VISIT…

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An Invitation to the Reader

In researching this book, we discovered many wonderful places—hotels, restaurants, shops, and more. We're sure you'll find others. Please tell us about them, so we can share the information with your fellow travelers in upcoming editions. If you were disappointed with a recommendation, we'd love to know that, too. Please write to:

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An Additional Note

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time—and this is especially true of prices. We therefore suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

About the Authors

Journalist **Joan Conrow** has made Kauai her home for the past 19 years, writing extensively about Hawaii's natural world, indigenous culture, social issues, and people. Her work has appeared in *Audubon*, *National Wildlife, Sierra*, and many other regional and national publications, as well as Reuters News Service. She also authors the "Island Preservation" column for *Hawaii Magazine*.

Born and raised on Oahu, **Lesa Griffith** is an editor and writer living in Honolulu.

Big Island–based journalist **David Thompson** grew up in Hawaii and writes about what goes on there for publications such as *Honolulu Magazine* and *Hana Hou!*, the in-flight magazine of Hawaiian Airlines.

Star Ratings, Icons & Abbreviations

Every restaurant, hotel, and attraction is rated with stars ★, indicating our opinion of that facility's desirability; this relates not to price, but to the value you receive for the price you pay. The stars mean:

No stars: Good
★ Very good
★★ Great
★★★ Outstanding! A must!

Accommodations within each neighborhood are listed in ascending order of cost, starting with the cheapest and increasing to the occasional "splurge." Each hotel review is preceded by one, two, three, or four dollar signs, indicating the price range per double room. Restaurants work on a similar system, with dollar signs indicating the price range per three-course meal.

Accommodations		**Dining**	
$	Up to $100 per night	**$**	Meals for $9 or less
$$	$101 to $150	**$$**	$10 to $15
$$$	$151 to $200	**$$$**	$16 to $21
$$$$	$201 and up	**$$$$**	$22 and up

In addition, we've included a kids icon kids to denote attractions, restaurants, and lodgings that are particularly child friendly.

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- Online updates to our most popular guidebooks
- Vacation sweepstakes and contest giveaways
- Newsletter highlighting the hottest travel trends
- Online travel message boards with featured travel discussions

A Note from Pauline

I STARTED TRAVELING WITH MY GUIDEBOOK-WRITING PARENTS, ARTHUR Frommer and Hope Arthur, when I was just four months old. To avoid lugging around a crib, they would simply swaddle me and stick me in an open drawer for the night. For half of my childhood, my home was a succession of hotels and B&B's throughout Europe, as we dashed around every year to update *Europe on $5 a Day* (and then $10 a day, and then $20 . . .).

We always traveled on a budget, staying at the Mom-and-Pop joints Dad featured in the guide, getting around by public transportation, eating where the locals ate. And that's still the way I travel today, because I learned—from the master—that these types of vacations not only save you money, but give you a richer, deeper experience of the culture. You spend time in local neighborhoods, and you meet and talk with the people who live there. For me, making friends and having meaningful exchanges is always the highlight of my trip—and the main reason I decided to become a travel writer and editor as well.

I've conceived these books as budget guides for a new generation. They have all the outspoken commentary and detailed pricing information that you've come to expect from the Frommer's guides, but they take bargain hunting into the 21st century, with more information on how you can effectively use the Internet and air/hotel packages to save money. Most important, we stress the availability of "alternative accommodations," not simply to save you money but to give you a more authentic experience in the places you visit.

In this Hawaii book, for example, we tell you about oceanfront condos in Kauai that rent for $105 a night (p. 24), an adorable B&B on the Big Island where you can sleep in a former coffee shack for $85 a night (p. 354), and an inn on the same island with a private, swimmable waterfall out back for $109 a night (p. 359). We also help you find the best travel packages to Oahu and Maui—in some cases, at prices of $100 a day or less for airfare, rental car, and hotel (p. 104 and 239).

In the following chapters, our sections on "The Other Maui," "The Other Oahu," and so on, immerse you in the life that residents of a place enjoy: the courses they take, the work they do, and the crafts they practice. Page through this guide and you'll find slack-key guitar jam sessions in Oahu (p. 156 and 182); kava bars on Oahu and the Big Island where you can try an ancient potion used in Hawaiian religious rituals (p. 153, 408, and 424); and volunteer opportunities that allow you to work alongside scientists studying the habits of Maui sea turtles (p. 298), among dozens of other experiences.

The result, I hope, is a valuable new addition to the world of guidebooks. Please let us know how we've done! I encourage you to email me at editor@frommers.com or write me care of Frommer's, 111 River St., Hoboken, NJ, 07030.

Happy traveling!

Pauline Frommer

1 The Best of Hawaii

From six islands, hundreds of beaches, and hundreds of sights—how do you choose?

by David Thompson

IT'S A QUANDARY, YOU MIGHT THINK. ARE THE ISLANDS DISTINCTIVE, OR are they alike? Don't they all have giant surf, pineapple fields, and big fancy hotels? And which one has the active volcano?

Actually, there are answers: yes, no, maybe, and the Big Island.

A map of Hawaii is like a portrait of siblings lined up in order of birth. Of the six main inhabited islands—Kauai, Oahu, Molokai, Lanai, Maui, and the Big Island—Kauai, on the far left, is the oldest, at close to 6 million years. Just under a million years old and posing on the far right is the Big Island, the baby of the bunch—though not forever. About 20 miles off the Big Island, in 3,000 feet of water, a volcanic seamount is rising. It's been dubbed Loihi, and scientists say it will become the next Hawaiian island, but it won't reach the surface for about another 150,000 years.

Ruling out Loihi, which island—or islands—would best suit you? Here are snapshots of each place to help you decide.

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE ISLANDS

KAUAI

The picture of Hawaii in the minds of people who've never been there is often one of Kauai—with rainbows appearing over waterfalls, sunny beaches, and dark, misty mountains. Kauai is the wettest and most weathered island, showcasing heavily sculpted mountains, as well as rivers and streams radiating from its center like spokes. Largely rural and overwhelmingly green, Kauai has a mountain peak in its middle where it almost never stops raining, and beaches around its edges where it almost always feels like summer. The laid-back towns have no big shopping malls, no nightlife to speak of, and no building taller than the coconut trees.

OAHU

Home to Honolulu and 75% of Hawaii's population, Oahu is the island with the action. Stretching for about 30 miles between iconic Diamond Head and historic Pearl Harbor, Honolulu's got glittering lights, an arts scene, nightlife, shopping, the high-rise canyons of Waikiki, and the Pacific's major military presence, not to mention LA-style freeways and gridlock. In addition to "town," as people call the

city, Oahu's got "country"—which includes the North Shore, where the monster winter waves break and the best surfers in the world push the limits of the sport a little further each year.

MOLOKAI

Molokai is the most Hawaiian of the main islands, with native Hawaiians making up the majority of its population of 7,000. It's also the most rural and the least oriented toward tourism. If you want to get the authentic, undiluted flavor of the Hawaiian Islands, go to Molokai. The accommodations are rustic and affordable, the eateries are geared toward local tastes, and the visitor activities tend toward simple country pleasures, like horseback riding and fishing. Remote beaches are the rule. The north side of the island, lined with the tallest sea cliffs on the planet, is largely inaccessible, though you can ride a mule down to Kalaupapa Peninsula, once a leper colony and still home to some old-timers with Hansen's disease who have chosen to stay on. A lot of day-trippers staying on Maui take the ferry or catch a flight for short visits to the island.

LANAI

Lanai is a small, dome-shaped island with no stop lights and nobody worried about leaving the car keys in their ignitions. Its single town, Lanai City, has a handful of bed-and-breakfasts, and almost all 3,000 of Lanai's residents live there. Pineapple fields covered the island until 1992, when Dole Food Company shifted its attention to tourism on the island. Now the pineapples are gone, and Dole's two ritzy hotels primarily drive the island's economy. A lot of day-trippers from Maui come over to snorkel or drive to the Garden of the Gods, an otherworldly landscape of boulders and spires that glow red and purple at sunset.

MAUI

Maui is the pampered, popular kid of the bunch, spoiled rotten with lavish resorts and idyllic beaches. Less hectic than Oahu but with no fewer things for visitors to do, its protected leeward waters are perfect for sailing, snorkeling, whale-watching, and all sorts of other ocean activities carried out by a fleet of tourist vessels. The deeply creased West Maui Mountains dominate one side of the island, while the smooth slopes of 10,023-foot Haleakala dominate the other. Trade winds trying to find their way around Haleakala gain speed and make for perfect windsurfing and kiteboarding conditions on Maui's north shore. The one-time whaling port of Lahaina is like a little Waikiki with a sense of history and a height ordinance.

THE BIG ISLAND

At just under a million years of age, the island of Hawaii, aka the Big Island, is the youngest and largest of the islands—and it's still growing. It's the land of the fire goddess Pele, who dwells in the crater of Kilauea volcano, which has been erupting almost continuously since 1983. This is where you go to see earth's fiery creation process unfold before your eyes. The Big Island is also home to Mauna Loa, the largest volcano on earth, which erupted last in 1984 and has been subtly swelling and deflating since. Mauna Kea, the tallest (and sometimes snow-capped) peak in the Pacific and the best site for astronomy on the planet, is there as well. Rainforests cover one side of the island and lava deserts cover the other,

with upcountry ranchland resembling the Scottish highlands in between. Deep waters off the Kona Coast bring giant ahi and billfish close to shore, giving Kona its reputation as one of the world's best places for deep-sea fishing.

BEST SIGHTS, ATTRACTIONS & ACTIVITIES

Visit a live volcano. Hike out to the lava flow at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park on the **Big Island** and watch molten rock ooze, pool, spill, and cascade through the flow field, occasionally gushing into the ocean over 80-foot cliffs. See p. 343.

Check out the Grand Canyon of the Pacific: Nearly 3,600 feet deep, Waimea Canyon on **Kauai** was carved from the runoff from Waialeale, one of the world's wettest spots. Drive the rim and watch the rock walls change from purples, greens, blues, grays, and reds. See p. 61.

Snorkel a reef: At Molokini, explore the half-sunken volcanic crater off **Maui;** at Kealakekua Bay on the **Big Island,** gaze into water so clear you can see the bottom at 100 feet; and at Hanauma Bay on **Oahu,** swim with fish that are so tame you can practically join their schools. See p. 310, 415, and 165.

Go whale-watching: Thousands of humpback whales spend the winter in Hawaii, mating, calving, and making a big splash—especially around **Maui.** See p. 294.

Scale Haleakala: Wake up on **Maui** in the wee hours to see the sunrise from atop Haleakala, "The House of the Sun," a dormant 10,023-foot volcano with a crater so alien NASA trained astronauts for moonwalks there. See p. 295.

Take a sunset cruise: Sip a mai tai under sail as night falls along **Kauai**'s spectacularly rugged Na Pali Coast (p. 78) . . . or off the high-rise urban jungle of Waikiki (p. 165) . . . or upon the tranquil waters around Lahaina (p. 326) . . . or in the deep near-shore waters off Kailua-Kona (p. 422).

BEST PEOPLE-WATCHING BEACHES

Waikiki Beach, Oahu: Diamond Head (an extinct volcanic crater), high-rise hotels, and the turquoise sea frame a sandy shore where thousands of visitors lay out in the sun and play in the long, gentle waves. See p. 137.

Kaanapali Beach, Maui: Come for the long, broad swath of sand lined with restaurants, bars, catamarans, and taut, tanned beachgoers. There's good swimming and snorkeling here. See p. 276.

Poipu Beach, Kauai: Visitors from nearby hotels and locals from around the island mingle in the water, on the sand, and in the grassy park here. See p. 23.

Big and Little Makena, Maui: Big Makena is a long golden beach that draws a huge crowd but never feels crowded. Little Makena is a short stretch of sand, hidden in a cove, where beachgoers bear it all. See p. 270.

BEST SECLUDED BEACHES

Makalawena, the Big Island: If you're willing to hike across a withering lava desert, you can discover this perfect Big Island beach where hardly anyone goes. See p. 384.

Red Sand Beach, Maui: An eroding red cinder nourishes this vibrantly colored beach at the bottom of a treacherous trail on Maui's lush, rural east side. See p. 281.

Shipwreck Beach, Lanai: Visit this windy Lanai beach at the end of a bumpy road to see two old ships rusting on the rocks. See p. 223.

Hanakapiai, Kauai: A 2-mile hike along the cliffs of Kauai's Na Pali Coast leads to this idyllic little beach fronting a deep, narrow tropical valley. (Keep hiking and the beaches become even more secluded.) See p. 47.

BEST BEACHES IF YOU'RE A KID

Kanaha Beach Park, Maui: The reef far offshore gives windsurfers waves to jump and keeps near-shore waters calm enough for babies to enjoy. See p. 279.

Lydgate County Park, Kauai: Here, easy swimming in well-protected pools carved into the reef, as well a community-built playground wonderland—with tall bridges to cross, a lava slide to shoot, and mazes to run—delight children. See p. 50.

Poipu Beach, Kauai: An open bay at this beach attracts Kauai's surfers and snorkelers, while a lava-rock jetty creates a sheltered area for kids. See p. 23.

Kapalua Beach, Maui: Two rocky promontories do an extremely good job of calming the waters at this perennially popular Maui beach fronting the Kapalua Bay Hotel Resort. See p. 278.

BEST BEACHES FOR OCEAN SPORTS

The North Shore, Oahu: Home to Sunset Beach, Pipeline, Waimea Bay, and many more celebrated surfing breaks, this area comes to life in the winter with giant waves. See p. 139.

Makapuu, Oahu: A consistent, year-round bodysurfing beach, Makapuu welcomes beginners when the surf is small and eats them for lunch when it gets big. See p. 138.

Hookipa, Maui: Also known as the Windsurfing Capital of the World, this is the home base for the Maui Air Force—windsurfers who catch huge air off the faces of breaking waves. See p. 280.

Kite Beach, Maui: Practitioners of Hawaii's newest extreme sport, kiteboarding, have claimed this as their very own beach. See p. 280.

Magic Sands, the Big Island: The sand here at the islands' best bodysurfing beach—along Alii Drive in Kailua-Kona—comes and goes with the storms. See p. 383.

BEST ACTIVE EXPERIENCES

Surf lessons: Learn to ride the waves with a pro surfer on Oahu or at the old whaling port of Lahaina on Maui with county lifeguards on the Big Island. See p. 157, 303, and 413.

Blasting down a zipline: You don't swing through the trees on Maui, you zip through them along a series of steel cables strung through a eucalyptus forest, back and forth across a gaping gulch. See p. 318.

Landing a marlin: Some of the world's best deep-sea fishing is just offshore from Kailua-Kona on the Big Island. See p. 417.

BEST "OTHER HAWAII" ACTIVITIES

Kick it: Hang with Hawaiian musicians jamming backyard-style while you nibble pupus and knock back beers at a down-home country club in Waimanalo on Oahu. See p. 156.

Relax: Get mellow on *awa* (or *kava* as this mildly narcotic, but perfectly legal, brew is also known) in Honolulu or with Big Island bohemians in the wilds of rural Puna. See p. 90 and 408.

Become an ecotourist: Join conservationists in the field; stand watch over the nests of endangered turtles. See p. 298.

BEST PLACES TO EAT

Ono Hawaiian Foods, Oahu: The *poi* is thick and fresh, the *laulau* luscious, and the line out front perpetual. See p. 132.

Blossoming Lotus, Kauai: At this affordable, ecofriendly, gourmet vegan place, you can get roasted-red-pepper curry for dinner and a kava brownie for dessert. See p. 39.

Mama's Fish House, Maui: Mama's elegant yet casual fine dinning is tucked in a palm grove in a lovely cove, with South Seas castaway decor so hokey it's chic. See p. 272.

Kilauea Lodge, Big Island: French and German classics share the menu with ostrich filet in this restaurant set in a cool, misty rainforest near the volcano on the Big Island. See p. 382.

2 Kauai: Hawaii's Garden of Eden

Nearly everyone has a soft spot for picturesque Kauai.

by Joan Conrow

AS THE OLDEST OF THE MAIN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS, KAUAI HAS BEEN RIPENING and maturing for more than 5 million years, weathering the passage of time exceptionally well. It has a character that the younger islands lack—visible in its fluted peaks, long beaches, river-cut valleys, and color-streaked canyons. Kauai is arguably one of the most spectacularly beautiful places on Earth, possessing a majesty wrought only by the slow, deft forces of geologic time.

And the island's appeal goes deeper than its scenery. Perhaps the best way to explain it is to discuss the mystery here; you can still access the area's primordial roots—in the gold-pink light that tints the ocean whitecaps at sunrise, the straight sheets of blowing rain, and the bits of drifting mist that drape kelly-green mountains.

Kauai has plenty of what Hawaiians call *mana* (spiritual energy). In a culture that defines *wai* (water) as wealth, the island's abundant fresh water is a major source of power. Its flattop volcano, Waialeale, is one of the wettest spots on Earth, receiving nearly 600 inches of rain per year.

Much of that water finds its way into the mighty Wailua River, the state's only navigable inland waterway. Not surprisingly, the fertile region around the river was favored by Hawaiian royalty and it remains culturally significant today, with numerous sacred archaeological sites running between the mountains and the sea. Rainfall in Kauai's rugged, largely inaccessible interior feeds numerous rivers that radiate like spokes around the circular-shaped island. These rivers have carved stunning valleys of varying size, each remarkably distinct and capable (in ancient times) of supporting the intensive taro-plant cultivation required to feed a sizable population.

Kauai is a special and unique place, but it isn't suited to travelers who seek designer boutiques, late-night partying, and flawless service. Its depth and magic are largely lost on those who give the island only a day or two of their time, driving the highway and declaring it seen. The soothing, healing calm slips past visitors who fill each minute of their vacation with activities and guided experiences.

But for those who want to quiet down, slow their pace, and soak in the true essence of a place, Kauai is perhaps the closest any of us will come to the Garden of Eden.

DON'T LEAVE KAUAI WITHOUT . . .

Shelling out. Buy a lei or some piece of jewelry strung from the exquisite, tiny shells collected predominantly on the beaches of privately owned Niihau. This traditional Hawaiian craft is unique to Kauai and has enjoyed a resurgence in recent years. The work is intricate and painstaking, with some elaborate finished strands fetching thousands of dollars. Before you lay out that kind of dough, ask for certification to make sure it's authentic. See p. 81.

Indulging in at least one wellness session. Kauai is known as the healing island, and it's home to a large, eclectic population of body workers and healers all eager to help you feel better. You'll be amazed at the modalities you can choose from: ayurvedic pancha karma, lomilomi and shiatsu massage, crystal healing, rolfing and chiropractic, art therapy, a "vibe" machine—and that's barely scratching the surface. Take advantage of it. And be daring—try something new. See p. 74.

Seeing Waimea Canyon and Na Pali Coast. These two gorgeous hunks of scenery just can't be found anywhere else in the world. Period. While there's no excuse for missing the colorful rock walls of Waimea Canyon, which can be ogled from numerous roadside scenic overlooks, Na Pali Coast requires a bit more effort. Your options are hiking along an 11-mile trail, paddling a kayak, taking a boat tour, or flying overhead in a helicopter. Whatever it takes, do it. The rugged fluted peaks and narrow, verdant valleys of this wilderness area are wonders in the already wondrous Pacific. See p. 61.

Purchasing original work by a local artist. Jewelry, pottery, glassware, wood crafts, photographic prints, fine art, mixed-media creations—Kauai's artisans make them all. The island is packed with gifted, creative people who put a lot of passion not just into their own projects, but into keeping the local art community alive. If you can't find any Kauai arts and crafts you like, you haven't been looking. See p. 69.

Saying mahalo. Utter this greeting to Kauai's people at least once, because they extend so much aloha. And most importantly, say it to the island, because of everything it gives. As many of us say, you're blessed just being here.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Of all the major Hawaiian islands, Kauai was the first to be inhabited. Kauai's first settlers are believed to be the Menehune, who displayed extraordinary engineering and stonecutting skills, which allowed them to divert water for agriculture and create fish ponds.

DISCOVERING KAUAI

Who were the Menehune? Today they're most commonly portrayed as elflike creatures with superhuman capabilities, who often completed their work impossibly fast and at night. The legend is so popular around the islands that the State Department of Transportation used a grinning, shaka-flashing Menehune graphic on its signs during a lengthy construction project at Honolulu Airport. Experts, however, theorize that the first arrivals may have been from the Marquesas Islands.

As the subsequent Polynesian migrations brought waves of new settlers to Kauai, the Marquesans, who were smaller in stature and less warlike than the newcomers, may have been driven out or simply overwhelmed. Or perhaps they sailed away, as some stories contend.

Kauai was the only island never physically conquered by King Kamehameha in his bloody unification drive. But after Kamehameha's warriors were twice beat back by natural forces before they reached Kauai's shores, the island's king, Kaumualii, peacefully negotiated terms that allowed him to retain power as Kauai's governor, forging the link that for the first time joined the entire island chain under one ruler in 1810.

Kauai has distinguished itself as the site of many important firsts in Hawaii's history. Captain James Cook, who in 1778 ushered in the era of Western contact that led to dramatic and disastrous consequences for the Kingdom of Hawaii, first landed in the bustling village of Waimea, on Kauai's West Side. Cook found a thriving population of several thousand people tending a vast network of taro fields within the natural wetlands, the patches connected by an elaborate series of waterways navigable by canoe. Similar scenes were being played out in fertile river valleys all around Kauai. The island's fertility and abundant water supply were not lost on the Westerners who followed Captain Cook in hopes of reaping fortunes from her red clay and loamy black soils. Massive diversion projects, nearly all of them constructed by Chinese laborers, channeled water out of Kauai's many streams and into the irrigation ditches of sugar-cane and pineapple fields. The sugar industry, which ruled Hawaii for 1½ centuries, got its start on Kauai in the pleasant little South Side town of Koloa and is now struggling to survive here. Gay & Robinson, which maintains fields on the West Side, is one of just two sugar plantations remaining in the state—the other is on Maui.

KAUAI TODAY

Although agriculture has dwindled, the island is still predominantly rural. Kauai produces the bulk of the state's coffee crop and two-thirds of its wetland taro. Tropical flowers, exotic fruits, free-range beef, honey, and goat cheese are among some of the other products found locally. Organic farming is expanding—and so is the island's controversial participation in the cultivation of genetically modified crops for both experimental and seed-corn purposes.

The island's resident population of about 66,000 is joined by some one million tourists each year, which largely fuels the economic engines. Kauai also has been discovered by the moneyed crowd, with the concurrent boom in luxury residential construction. The Navy's Pacific Missile Ranch Facility, which conducts rocket launches for the "Star Wars" missile defense program, is a major employer on the West Side.

Socially and culturally, Kauai continues to march to the beat of its own drummer. Despite the island's small size, folks tend to be clannish, sticking close to home and not generally venturing out of their geographic region. Family connections remain important. Kauai also has one of the highest rates of volunteerism and per capita giving in the state, reflecting the kindness and generosity typical of most residents.

Until recently, Kauai was known as a casual, low-key place where few residents had money, drove fancy cars, or lived in large homes. But things have changed

dramatically since 2000, when a spurt of growth seriously frayed Kauai's close-knit social fabric. People from the mainland have arrived more rapidly than they can be assimilated into the tight-knit rural communities; worse, too many of the newcomers lack any sense of local style and island culture and apparently have no desire to be a part of that life. They have erected fences that close off longtime coastal and mountain access ways, built large homes overlooking formerly secluded beaches, and speculated in real estate, driving up home prices and property tax rates to a point where most local residents are excluded from the market.

Today Kauai is clearly at a crossroads. Many longtime residents are stunned at how quickly the island's physical and social landscape is being altered. Folks are starting to question just how much more development the island can take before its charm is lost, and its populace is thoroughly displaced and disaffected by the widening chasm between rich and poor.

LAY OF THE LAND

The island is about 500 square miles, and round. Because the wet, mountainous interior is largely inaccessible, most of the human activity is centered in very small towns strung along a highway that spans about two-thirds of the island. Between the two ends of the highway lies the rugged, impassible Na Pali Coast, another of Kauai's legendary landscapes.

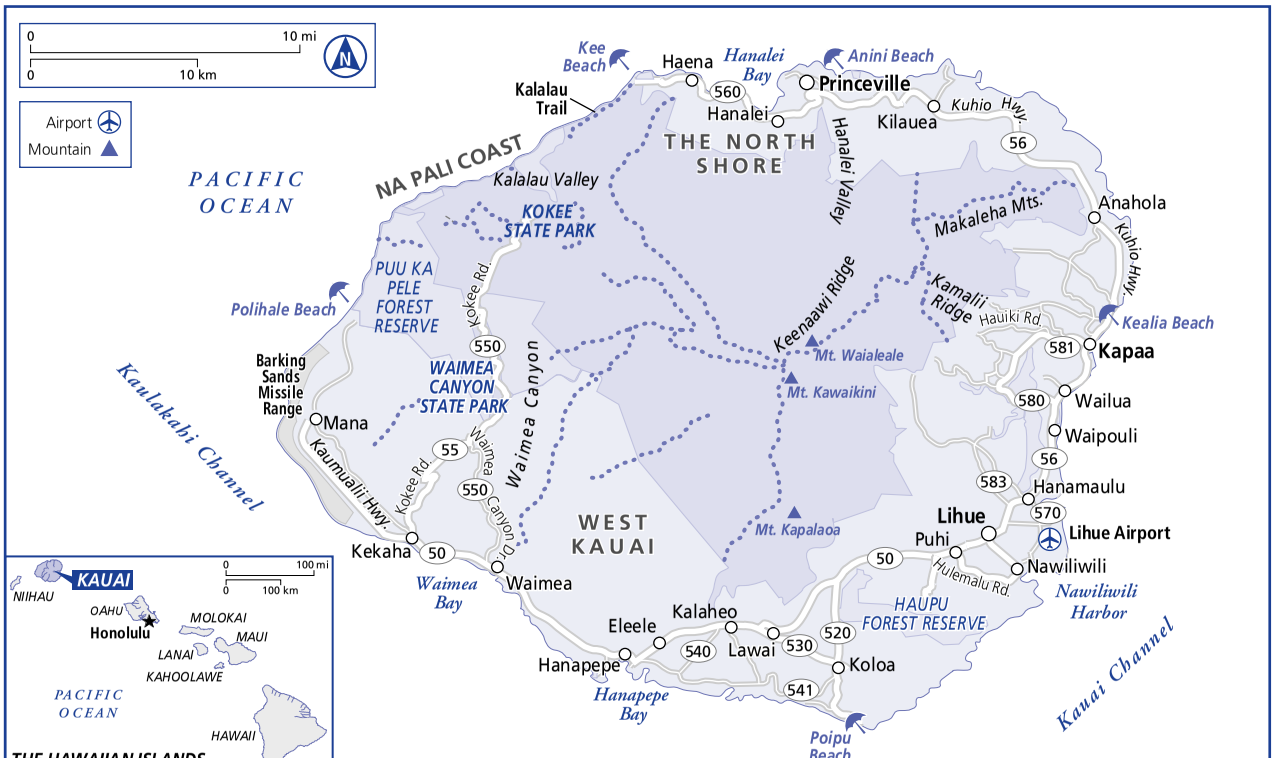
The main roadway that nearly encircles the island changes its name at Lihue; it's called **Kuhio Highway (Rte. 56)** when you're traveling northeast and **Kaumualii Highway (Rte. 50)** when you're headed southwest. But be advised when asking directions that most locals use the highway names and may not even know the highway numbers. Lihue is also the unofficial dividing line between the windward side of the island, which lies to its northeast, and the leeward side, which encompasses everything to the southwest.

It's easy to get around on Kauai because two major frames of reference—*mauka* (the mountains) and *makai* (the sea)—are nearly always visible from the highway, and there's essentially one main road. But that doesn't mean it's a breeze to cruise around the island. Traffic moves slowly even on the highway, which is two lanes almost everywhere except a short stretch between Lihue and Wailua and a few passing lanes on the West Side. Side roads are invariably narrow, and you need to watch for potholes everywhere.

DRIVING TIPS

During the usual morning and evening commute hours, traffic often comes to a virtual standstill in the corridors between Wailua and Kapaa, and Lihue and Koloa. Fortunately, Kauai's traffic problems have given rise to a strict and thoughtful driving etiquette that requires motorists to wave to enter or cross traffic. Vehicles are allowed to merge into traffic, one at a time, alternating with through traffic, so be sure to get with the program. It's all very civilized, and you'll appreciate the friendliness and eye contact of most motorists, despite the occasional instance of road rage.

If you're sightseeing and traveling slower than the speed limit, pull over and let the cars behind you pass. Kauai motorists are notorious for pulling out in front of you, too, so drive defensively. And be sure to wear your seatbelt, as Kauai police


0
10 mi
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Airport
Mountain
PACIFIC OCEAN
NA PALI COAST
Kalalau Trail
Kee Beach
Haena
Hanalei Bay
Anini Beach
Princeville
Hanalei
Kilauea
Kuhio Hwy.
56
THE NORTH SHORE
Hanalei Valley
Kalalau Valley
KOKEE STATE PARK
Makaleha Mts.
Anahola
Kuhio Hwy.
PUU KA PELE FOREST RESERVE
Kokee Rd.
Polihale Beach
Keenaawi Ridge
Kamalii Ridge
Hauiki Rd.
Kealia Beach
Kapaa
581
550
WAIMEA CANYON STATE PARK
Waimea Canyon
Barking Sands Missile Range
Mt. Waialeale
Mt. Kawaikini
580
Wailua
Mana
Waipouli
55
Waimea Canyon Dr.
Kaumualii Hwy.
Kokee Rd.
56
583
Hanamaulu
570
Lihue
Lihue Airport
Puhi
WEST KAUAI
Mt. Kapalaoa
50
Hulemalu Rd.
Nawiliwili
Kekaha
Waimea
Waimea Bay
Nawiliwili Harbor
Kalaheo
HAUPU FOREST RESERVE
Eleele
520
530
540
Lawai
Koloa
Hanapepe
Hanapepe Bay
541
Poipu Beach
Kauai Channel
Kaulakahi Channel
KAUAI
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OAHU
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THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

delight in setting up "sting" operations around the island aimed at ticketing motorists and passengers who aren't buckled up. It's a $70 fine, and the cops are immune to sad stories.

In that same vein, be aware that the speed limit on the main highways usually drops from 50 mph down to 25 or 35 mph as you go through small towns and communities that may appear to be little more than wide spots in the road, with a post office and convenience store. Be sure to reduce your speed here, not just because police may be using radar to catch scofflaws, but out of courtesy to the folks—and especially to the children—who may be walking, riding bicycles, or pulling on and off the highway.

THE AREAS & MAJOR TOWNS

The **East Side,** which extends from Lihue through Kapaa, is the population and political hub of the island, and thus the area with the greatest selection of restaurants, shops, and lower-cost lodging. In **Lihue,** you'll find modern Wilcox Hospital; state and county office buildings, including police headquarters and the courthouse; and most of the usual big box stores and fast-food restaurants.

Kapaa is Kauai's biggest town. It sprang up to serve folks who worked in the vast sugar cane fields and pineapple plantations that once stretched several miles inland from the coast. It's still a real town, with a mix of restored historic buildings and new construction, resort condominiums, and adorable, old-fashioned beach bungalows. Most structures are under three stories tall.

You'll find an eclectic collection of shops and restaurants frequented by residents and visitors alike on the northern end of town, along with **Kapaa Beach Park,** a fenced, grassy park that lies between Kuhio Highway and the sea. Community fairs and other events are often staged here; check the fence for banners announcing upcoming festivities. The East Side is an excellent, centralized area from which to explore the entire island, and it doesn't feel as touristy as the North Shore and South Side. In terms of weather and scenery, its windward orientation translates into frequent showers and cooling trade winds year-round, with resulting verdant vegetation.

Most visitors head for the **South Side,** drawn to the large luxury hotels and condominium projects along the coast at Poipu. This part of the island has never been my favorite, but I understand its appeal, which is largely based on the weather. Folks looking to get in some beach time during the typical 1-week stay don't want to risk rain and cloudy days, and although both can be found at Poipu, they occur with far less frequency than on the North Shore, especially during winter months.

Poipu itself is the largest resort community on Kauai. One very nice feature is a delightful shoreline promenade that connects many of the little coves and beaches that front the resorts. This is the place to take a stroll and watch a picture-perfect sunset. If beaching, golf, ocean sports, horseback riding, hiking, and sightseeing appeal to you, Poipu is a good choice. Shore dives, snorkeling, board- and bodysurfing, boogie boarding, and safe swimming are found here. Poipu is located between commercial harbors at Port Allen, to the west, and Nawiliwili, to the east, making it easy to catch fishing charters and Na Pali Coast tour boats. It's also convenient for day trips to Waimea Canyon, with its numerous hiking trails.

Repatterned Traffic

If you're out early on weekdays, don't be caught off guard by the miles of orange plastic cones that create an entirely different traffic configuration for Kuhio Highway between Kapule Highway and the Coconut Marketplace. The cones, set out before dawn by state highway crews and picked up again after 9am, transform the middle lane, which is normally northbound, into a thoroughfare for southbound commuters. The contra-flow setup keeps traffic moving smoothly in the busy Lihue-Kapaa corridor during peak travel times, but it can be daunting when first encountered. Just remember that you'll find center turn lanes in all the usual, necessary places, although they're not initially easy to spot amid the mass of cones.

On the opposite end of the island lies the **North Shore,** the second-most popular destination for Kauai visitors. The heart-stopping scenery (some of the sea cliffs along rugged Na Pali Coast reach heights of 2,500 ft.) and miles of idyllic coastline explain its allure, although many wintertime tourists find the weather too wet and the ocean too rough for their tastes. The surf definitely comes up between September and May; bays that are turquoise blue lakes in summer months become churning washing machines of white water when the 20- to 30-foot winter swells roll in.

The **West Side** is the least developed region on Kauai, which helps explain why it has managed to retain the look and feel of the old, slow Hawaii. The hot, dry climate of this leeward area and a discernable cowboy culture distinguish it from the rest of the island, as does its geographic isolation. The economy of the predominantly rural West Side is dominated by agriculture, so hotels, shops, lodging, and other commercial services are limited.

GETTING TO & AROUND KAUAI

After living on Kauai for nearly 2 decades, I find it difficult to tear myself away and rarely leave the island. But when I do, I love nothing more than flying back home and arriving at **Lihue Airport.** I always sit on the left side of the plane, eagerly watching for that first magical glimpse of the brooding Haupu Range and the wind-chopped waters of Kalapaki Bay, before we circle over the coastal sprawl and manicured golf courses of the Kauai Marriott Beach Resort and Kauai Lagoons and land.

The views are restorative after the long journey it takes to get to the island. With the exception of a handful of flights from Los Angeles and San Francisco, most every itinerary requires a stop-over in Honolulu. I've found that **Aloha Airlines** (☎ 800/367-5250; www.alohaairlines.com) and **Hawaiian Airlines** (☎ 800/367-5320; www.hawaiianair.com) can be good places to look for sales, but sometimes the majors will match or even undercut their rates, so be sure to search around before you book (www.sidestep.com is an excellent tool). Unlike Maui and Oahu, there is a dearth of **package deals** to Kauai, but if you're planning on

using one of the big three websites for booking airfares—Orbitz.com, Expedia.com, or Travelocity.com—it may behoove you to see if booking airfare in tandem with hotels leads to savings. As I said, Kauai is not a big "package deal" island, but it can't hurt to try.

GETTING TO & FROM THE AIRPORT

Both the airport and **Nawiliwili Harbor,** where the cruise ships dock, are located about 3 miles east of **Lihue,** the centrally located county seat. Since no public buses service the airport, you can **call a taxi** or **rent a car** if you're not part of a tour group that will pick you up (some of the more expensive hotels will also send a shuttle; ask). Unless you plan to spend all your time lounging poolside at your resort, I suggest a car rental. Taxis tend to be far too expensive and inconvenient to employ for touring, especially if you want to linger anywhere, as you surely will. Even taking a cab to your hotel is pricey: You can expect to pay $15 to $20 to reach a Poipu resort, and a whopping $35 to $40 if your destination is on the North Shore. By comparison, it costs about $30 to $35 a day to rent an economy car.

All the usual rental-car companies do business on Kauai, with service desks located at the Lihue Airport and courtesy vans that shuttle customers to their nearby base yards, where the cars are stored. You can choose from **Alamo Rent a Car** (☎ 877/603-0615 or 808/245-0645; www.alamo.com); **Avis** (☎ 800/831-2847 or 808/245-3512; www.avis.com); **Budget** (☎ 800/527-0700 or 808/245-9031; www.budget.com); **Dollar** (☎ 800/800-4000; www.dollar.com); **Hertz** (☎ 800/654-3011 or 808/245-3356; www.hertz.com); **National** (☎ 888/868-6207 or 808/245-5636; www.nationalcar.com); and **Thrifty** (☎ 800/847-4389 or 866/450-5101; www.thrifty.com). Avis also has a service desk at the Princeville Airport (☎ 808/826-9773) and Hyatt Regency in Poipu (☎ 808/742-1627), while Hertz has a rental desk at the Kauai Marriott (☎ 808/246-0027). Independent rental firms include **CarsHawaii.com** (☎ 866/354-2277 or 808/245-3233; www.carshawaii.com), which has no airport service desk, but delivers vehicles to motorists in the region between Poipu and Kapaa; **Island Cars** (2983 Aukele St., Lihue; ☎ 800/246-6009 or 808/246-6000; www.islandcars.net), which is located near the Lihue Airport, and has no credit car or minimum age requirement; and **Rent A Wreck of Kauai** (☎ 808/632-0741), whose claim to lower rates is offset by frequently unreliable vehicles.

Important: Reserve a car in advance; rates tend to be lower and you're more likely to get the vehicle you desire. All major car-rental companies operate on Kauai and charge competitive rates. Save money by renting the smallest vehicle you can find. Gas is expensive on Kauai, roads are small, and the maximum speed limit is 50 mph. Jeeps and convertibles often prove a nuisance in the frequent rain showers, and you won't need four-wheel-drive capability.

The Lihue Airport has two baggage-claim terminals, one at either end of the facility, and the car-rental offices are conveniently located between the two, across the street. An information booth with literature about various island activities can be found outside each baggage terminal, and they're staffed during all arriving flights.

GETTING TO YOUR ACCOMMODATIONS

Once you're all loaded up and ready to go, follow the one-way road that fronts the airport and stay in the middle lane as it makes a sharp jog to the left; you're now

Why You Don't Want to Take the Bus

The **Kauai Bus** (☎ 808/241-6410) offers limited service to most towns along the main highway; however, it does not stop at the airport, accept baggage, or operate in the evening.

on Ahukini Road, which passes tour-helicopter and charter-plane hangars to your right, as well as airport freight offices. Stay in the center lane, and you'll soon reach the well-landscaped intersection with Kapule Highway.

If you're headed to lodgings on the East Side or North Shore—the communities of Wailua, Kapaa, Kilauea, Princeville, and Hanalei—turn right. If you want to reach accommodations on the South Side, including Poipu and Kalaheo, go straight through the intersection and stay on Ahukini Highway until it dead-ends into Kuhio Highway. Here you'll take a left and then, after a short jaunt, a right onto Kaumualii Highway, which leads in about 7 miles to the Maluhia Road turnoff for Koloa and Poipu Beach. It then continues another 23 miles to Waimea, passing Lawai, Kalaheo, and Hanapepe along the way.

ACCOMMODATIONS, BOTH STANDARD & NOT

Lodging can take a big bite out of your Kauai travel budget, requiring budget-conscious travelers to be clear about their needs, versus desires, when looking for accommodations. Although a few East Side hotels do offer lower-cost rooms, the greatest selection of value-priced lodgings is found in condominiums and free-standing vacation rental units.

Condominiums and **hotels** are located in resort areas, such as **Poipu, Princeville, Lihue,** and the so-called **Coconut Coast,** which stretches between **Wailua** and **Kapaa** on the windward side. Each condominium project offers different amenities and services, as hotels do, and these considerations, along with proximity to the beach and golf course and the quality of the view, determine their price. I think it's easiest to choose a resort area that meets your needs in terms of location and perks, and then look for a unit there that fits your budget.

Since most condominiums within a resort are privately owned, they vary widely in decor and furnishings. Generally, however, you can be assured that the properties we list here will be reasonably clean, well maintained, and landscaped. They invariably have a pool and barbecue pit. Tennis courts, daily maid service, spas, exercise rooms, golf, Jacuzzis, restaurants, poolside bars, entertainment, concierge desk, and room service are some of the optional amenities. Obviously, the less you need, the less you pay.

Other factors to consider are whether the condominiums have full kitchens or kitchenettes, which are usually limited to microwave ovens, coffeemakers, toasters, and perhaps a hot plate; and whether they have shared laundry facilities or in-unit washer-dryers. Bottom line: Make no assumptions. If something is important to you, ask to make sure the condo has it. If you have any physical limitations, be certain to inquire about the unit's location within the complex. Although Kauai lacks high-rise condominiums, elevators are rare in two- and

three-story buildings, so be prepared for stairs unless you request a ground-floor unit. Walkways between units, especially those in Princeville, with its more hilly terrain, may be steep. Bell service is almost never available, so travel light and be ready to handle your own bags. If you find you need help when you get there, just ask nicely. Niceness goes a long way on Kauai, where you'll always catch more flies with honey than vinegar.

The other main source of alternate and budget accommodations is the ever-growing supply of **vacation rentals.** These run the gamut from extremely funky units in dreary neighborhoods to cute beachfront cottages to luxurious homes on sprawling estates. You can find some bargains here, especially if you're not intent on being near the ocean, but when navigating these waters, be forewarned: This is a largely unregulated industry on Kauai. Sue Kanoho, director of the Kauai Visitors Bureau, recently told me that nearly all the complaints made to her office are linked to vacation rentals.

The story often goes something like this: A tourist procures a vacation rental that looks better on the website than it does in real life, and is unhappy to discover that the owner has no intention of refunding any payment. Depending on the season, alternate accommodations may be either lacking altogether or considerably more expensive than the visitor planned to spend, adding to his or her aggravation. And there's not a thing to be done about it. From my perspective as a longtime resident, vacation rentals have another dark side, as well. They're helping to fuel the current real-estate speculation and construction boom that's driving housing prices beyond the reach of most locals, while also squeezing the long-term rental market, resulting in ridiculously high rates and very limited availability.

A Lodgings Expert at Your Service

by Pauline Frommer

For the past 27 years, **Rosemary Smith** of **Rosewood Bed & Breakfast** (☎ 808/822-5216; www.rosewoodkauai.com) has been tirelessly peeking under sheets, fingering washcloths, and testing water pressure at the three dozen or so properties she represents around Kauai. Proudly particular, she spot-checks all of these B&Bs, condos, and vacation rentals at least once every 3 months, issuing marching orders to the hosts who don't yet have pillow-top mattresses, or refusing to allow a burned potholder to remain by a stove. "I won't represent anyplace I wouldn't stay myself," she told me. "People are coming here on vacation; the last thing they need to get is a lumpy bed." Best of all, many of the properties she represents are reasonably priced, hovering between $45 and $120 per night (though a couple of them do bounce up to around $295 per night). Rosemary is a terrific source of advice, direct, and highly knowledgeable—which is why I personally recommend her services as another option for those seeking quality lodgings on Kauai.

That said, vacation rentals are a fact of life on Kauai, and I have included some properties that I know to be well maintained and that are in areas zoned or appropriate for visitor accommodation and transient occupancy uses. If you look for other options on your own, consider renting a hotel room for your first night or two, then choose your vacation rental once you're on the island. Rentals are advertised in *The Garden Island,* Kauai's local newspaper, and real-estate companies also maintain listings. The same rules of inquiry used in screening condos also apply to vacation rentals. Ask about cleaning fees, and be sure to scrutinize the rental agreement in regard to refunds for cancellation; the terms are usually strict and favor the landlord. Be advised that many condos and vacation rentals do not accept credit cards; always ask.

Vacation rentals and condos with cooking facilities offer opportunities to save money that otherwise would be spent eating out. That's a worthwhile consideration on Kauai, where restaurant meals are often pricey and much of the food isn't noteworthy. These lodgings may also prove more comfortable than a hotel for honeymoon couples desiring privacy, a group of friends or family traveling together, folks with kids in tow, and anyone staying for longer than 4 or 5 days.

Kauai has few true **bed-and-breakfasts.** Many places that bill themselves as B&Bs actually rent out vacation cottages, where self-serve breakfast fixings may or may not be provided. They're usually not all that cheap, either. Make no assumptions until you check out what's being offered.

When choosing a place to stay, **location is an important consideration.** Prices rise the closer you get to the ocean and within major resort communities like Princeville and Poipu. East Side accommodations are more reasonably priced. It's also wise to think about how you plan to spend your time on Kauai, and book lodgings near your desired activities. The Garden Island looks small on the map, but it takes time to get around.

Note: When looking at room rates in this chapter, don't forget to add Hawaii's 11.42% accommodations tax to the total.

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continues

Average price per night for one double room: $ = Up to $100; $$ = $101 to $150; $$$ = $151 to $200; $$$$ = $201 and up

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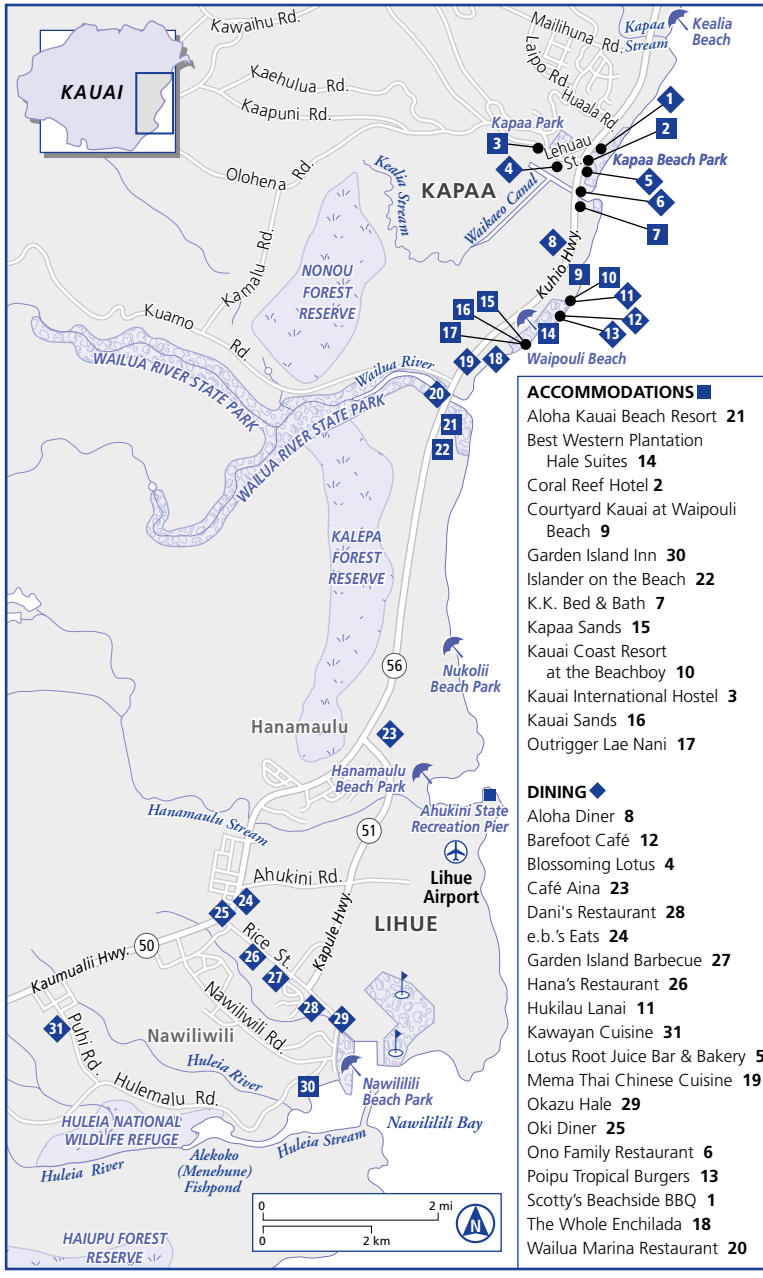
Average price per night for one double room: $ = Up to $100; $$ = $101 to $150; $$$ = $151 to $200; $$$$ = $201 and up

THE EAST SIDE

The sweetest lodging deals on Kauai can be found on the East Side, between **Lihue** and **Kapaa.** This area isn't quite as touristy because the beaches, though long and sandy, aren't considered up to snuff. The windward side is fully exposed to trade winds, which take the mugginess out of summer days but kick up the surf and bring rain showers during the winter. One of Hawaii's longest fringing coral

Where to Stay & Dine on Kauai's East Side



ACCOMMODATIONS

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Wailua Marina Restaurant **20**

reefs hugs the coastline here, making it great for shoreline fishing and miles-long beachcombing walks, but not so ideal for swimming.

Along the East Side, the so-called **"Coconut Coast,"** which runs from **Wailua** to **Kapaa,** is your best bet, especially if you're traveling with children. This is Kauai's major population center, with a wide selection of restaurants and shops, as well as hiking, golf, kayaking, bicycling, movie theaters, video arcades, and other activities. The lodging in this area generally lies between the ocean and Kuhio Highway, an area that gets busy and congested during daylight hours. It can be daunting to execute a left turn onto the road.

$ If you're looking for local style and cheap accommodations, the place to stay is **K.K. Bed & Bath** (Kauwila St., Kapaa; ☎ 800/615-6211, code 32, or 808/822-7348; www.kkbedbath.com), a one-person operation run by a descendant of the Kawamura family, who lives in a historic 1924 house on the same lot. The studio unit is named after Grandpa Kano Kawamura, in keeping with his dream of building a lodging house, and at $40 a night for one person and $50 for two, it's a bargain—if you're willing to abide by the rules. Reservations are required at least a week in advance, the exact street address isn't published because drop-ins aren't welcome. You also must help out by emptying your own trash, washing off beach sand in the outside shower so you don't clog the drain, and refraining from excessive noise. In return, you'll get a clean, very simple, 300-square-foot unit with a good-size private bathroom with shower. The bedroom is furnished with a firm, queen-size bed, microwave, minifridge, cable TV, and telephone, and you can borrow a grill and beach gear. No breakfast is served, and the central Kapaa location can be noisy in daylight hours. But it's only a block from the beach, the price is right, and this is how most Kauai folks really live. There's a 3-night minimum, with a 10% discount for stays beyond a week, and a car-room package is available. ***Note:*** Credit cards are not accepted.

$ Kauai International Hostel (4532 Lehua St.; ☎ 808/823-6142; www.kauaihostel.net) is another bargain in North Kapaa, not far from K.K.'s but quite a bit more scruffy. This hostel is busy and shows the wear, but you won't find anything cheaper within walking distance of a Kauai beach. The setting is noisy during the day but quiets down considerably at night. If you're really pinching pennies, bunk in the dorm for $20; if you can swing $50, book the more comfortable private room with double bed. The bathrooms, kitchen, laundry, and TV room with pool table are shared.

$–$$ A recent upgrade lifted the third discount property in this neighborhood out of the dump category. **Coral Reef Hotel** (1516 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ 800/843-4659 or 808/822-4481; www.hotelcoralreef.com), which has been around since the 1960s, is a rather old-fashioned, bare-bones resort, with complimentary coffee in the lobby and a laundry room. Rooms closest to the highway start at $99; oceanfront suites are worth the extra $50 charged, since they're newer, brighter, larger, quieter, and just 40 feet from the ocean, with kitchenettes and beachfront lanais. The suites are definitely the best choice for families. There's no pool, no phones in the rooms, and no bathtubs, just showers.

Taking into Account the Seasons—or Not—in Kauai

There's minimal variation in the weather or pricing from season to season. Late spring and fall tend to be the cheapest times of the year, and the summer may be negligibly warmer than other times of the year. The changes in the ocean are more drastic; from December through April, "kona storms" at sea can make the waters too rough for ocean activities in all but the most sheltered coves, sometimes for days at a time. As a result, whale-watching cruises are sometimes canceled at this time of year, which is ironic, considering that this is the best time of year to spot these behemoths.

$–$$ Kauai Sands (420 Papaloa Rd.; ☎ 800/560-5553 or 808/822-4951; www.kauaisandshotel.com), a modest, 200-room oceanfront inn, is one of just a handful in the state that are Hawaiian-owned and operated. This is basic, utilitarian lodging—clean and sparsely furnished, with thin linens and towels. But at rates running from $88 to $118, it's a good value for a waterfront property that has a few resort amenities—including two pools, a small fitness center, and a lounge off the lobby—that its neighbors lack. All rooms have refrigerators; a few have kitchenettes.

$$–$$$ It's hard to beat Coral Reef's prices at other Coconut Coast resorts, but **Kapaa Sands** (380 Papaloa Rd.; ☎ 800/222-4901 or 808/822-4901; www.kapaasands.com) comes close, and in most every way, it's a better property—quieter, fresher, with better views from the rooms, nicer grounds, and, like the other lodgings in its Wailua neighborhood, it's walking-distance close to the many shops and restaurants at the Coconut Marketplace. The two-bedroom units have full kitchens and private lanais, while the studios use pull-down Murphy beds that aren't the most comfortable mattresses I've slept on. All rooms have microwaves, cable TV, VCRs, and either a full or partial ocean view; however, all but the oceanfront rooms are rather dark. This is a tiny, no-frills oceanfront property, with just 20 condos and a small pool. Rates range from $110 to $175.

$$–$$$ Families will find the one-bedroom units at **Best Western Plantation Hale Suites** (484 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ 800/775-4253 or 808/822-4941; www.plantationhale.com) a decent value, with rates ranging from $119 to $185. There's a nice Hawaiian-style ambience to these 145 plantation-style units, which makes them feel pleasant and cozy. Kitchen facilities and garden lanai add to the comfort and convenience. The units are cheerful and fresh, and kids will appreciate the in-room video games. For maximum quiet, request a unit on the *makai* side of the property.

$$$ Islander on the Beach kids (4460 Nehe Rd., Kapaa; ☎ 800/922-7866 or 808/822-9331; www.resortquesthawaii.com) is another great option for families because it's right on the beach and adjacent to kid-friendly Lydgate Park, with its Kamalani playground and protected swimming holes in the reef. These one- and

two-bedroom condos feel more private and comfy than you would expect for the price; rates range from $156 to $260 and you can save about 22% booking online. Units have coastal or garden views, but you're so close to the water that it's not really worth paying more for the ocean view. While this is a very nice property, it is at times subject to odors from a sewage treatment plant in the vicinity.

$$$–$$$$ The nearby **Kauai Coast Resort at the Beachboy** (kids) (520 Aleka Loop; ☎ 877/977-4355 or 808/822-3441; www.shellhospitality.com), a timeshare property tucked behind Coconut Marketplace, is a better deal, offering 108 units of similar size and quality for $190 to $295 per night. The grounds are nicer here, too, featuring a rare heated pool with a little waterfall, day spa, kids' pool, gym, ocean-side hot tub, tennis courts, and excellent in-house restaurant, the Hukilau Lanai. The modern units—fully refurbished in 2003—are uniformly furnished with comfortable beds and couches, and decorated with rich woods, tropical prints, and Hawaiian-quilt designs. They have full kitchens and in-room dataports; all the units are housed in three buildings. This is a very good property for families, and the best choice in these parts if you're looking to upgrade above the real budget level.

$$$–$$$$ Somewhat comparable is its neighbor to the north, the **Courtyard Kauai at Waipouli Beach** (4–484 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ Marriott 800/760-8555 or 808/822-3455; http://marriott.com). This longtime hotel, formerly known as the Kauai Coconut Beach Resort, was totally refurbished when Marriott turned it into a timeshare property in 2005. The bright rooms look out on the pool and ocean and include free wireless high-speed Internet access and wet bars. They lack the convenience of a kitchen, but the coconut-shaded grounds, nightly torch-lighting ceremony, tennis courts, oceanfront pool, shuffleboard courts, and hot tubs provide entertainment value and charm. Rooms rent for $159 to $259, but discounts are available for AAA and AARP members, for seniors, and through online booking; car and breakfast packages are also available.

$$$$ Next door to Islander on the Beach (see above) is the more upscale **Outrigger Lae Nani** (410 Papaloa Rd.; ☎ 808/822-4938 or 800/688-7444; www.outriggerlaenani.com), a pleasant complex of 84 one- and two-bedroom condos, each with full kitchen and large lanai, making them a good choice for those who plan a longer stay or want a more homelike environment. Guests have access to tennis courts here, too, as well as a pool. Each of the individually owned units has its own decor and furnishings, and most have views that take in the nicely landscaped grounds as well as the sea. At rates running from $225 to $350, with 15% discounts for booking online, this place is on the high end of the scale for lodgings along this stretch of coast.

$$$$ The low-key **Aloha Kauai Beach Resort** (kids) (3–5920 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ 888/823-5111 or 808/823-6000; www.abrkauai.com) lies just to the north, on the banks of Wailua Bay and Wailua River. This low-rise resort caters to families with packages that allow kids under 18 to stay for free and children under 12 to eat for free. It also adjoins Lydgate Park and is near a number of restaurants and shops, although its otherwise convenient location is slightly marred by the near-constant

traffic around its entrance, which makes walking dangerous. The 188 rooms are perfectly adequate, if uninspired, with furnishings that fall somewhere between budget and luxury. The one-bedroom beach cottages, with kitchenettes, work well if you're traveling with kids. The grounds, which slope toward the sea, include two nice pools, volleyball and shuffleboard courts, and a gym. Rooms are $198 to $231, while cottages and suites are $330 to $528, with numerous discount packages and savings for AAA and AARP members and government employees.

LIHUE

$–$$ If you choose, for some reason that I can't fathom, to stay in the town of Lihue, the only reasonable choice is the **Garden Island Inn** (3445 Wilcox Rd.; ☎ 800/648-0154 or 808/245-7227; www.gardenislandinn.com), which lies across the street from Kalapaki Bay and the Kauai Marriott Beach Resort. You'll find 21 rooms and two suites for $90 to $135—going up in price from the ground floor to the third floor—which is about $200 less than lodgings at the Marriott. No, it's not as fancy, but it's clean and fully adequate. Plus, the staff is friendly, sharing beach gear with you and fruit from the grounds. Fresh flowers in the rooms are another nice touch. Some units have kitchens, others have kitchenettes; all the rooms have refrigerators and cable TV. Given its proximity to Nawiliwili Harbor and Lihue Airport, this hotel, like the Marriott, suffers from traffic and aircraft noise, although both drop off at night. ***Be prepared:*** If you want to close the windows to block the noise, make sure to request a room with air-conditioning.

THE SOUTH SIDE: POIPU BEACH

Although Poipu is attractive, with extensive landscaping that minimizes the density and impact of the mostly low-rise resort properties, it is not a true town and therefore lacks a sense of community. Koloa, about 2 or 3 miles inland from the coastal resorts, is the town in these parts, and it's a very cute one at that, with wooden plantation-style structures lining a main street shaded with large flowering trees. Here you'll find the bank, post office, school, library, grocery stores, and other services one would expect in a small commercial area.

Poipu has a number of beaches that are well suited to less-experienced ocean swimmers and beginning snorkelers, especially children, which adds to its draw. It also has a wider range of accommodations, but mainly in the luxury and moderate price categories—the expression "budget Poipu accommodations" is an oxymoron. The restaurant and shopping choices are correspondingly broad, but remember, this is Kauai, so your options are never numerous.

If you'd like to go the condo route, two good choices are **Poipu Crater Resort** (2330 Hoohu Rd.; ☎ 808/742-7260) and **ResortQuest at Poipu Kai** (1775 Poipu Rd.; ☎ 877/997-6667 or 808/742-7400; www.resortquesthawaii.com). At these and other Kauai condo projects, most of which are timeshare properties, the units are individually owned and rented out by various agents. **Suite Paradise** (1941 Poipu Rd.; ☎ 800/367-8020 or 808/742-7400; www.suite-paradise.com) consistently offers the best prices, including discounts for online bookings, rental cars, airfare-room packages, and activities. Another reputable agent with a big selection is **Grantham Resorts** (3176 Poipu Rd., Suite 1; ☎ 800/325-5701 or 808/742-2000; www.grantham-resorts.com); both agents also manage condos at the higher-priced,

and more luxurious, resorts of Kiahuna Plantation, Nihi Kai Villas, Whaler's Cove, Poipu Shores, and Poipu Kapili.

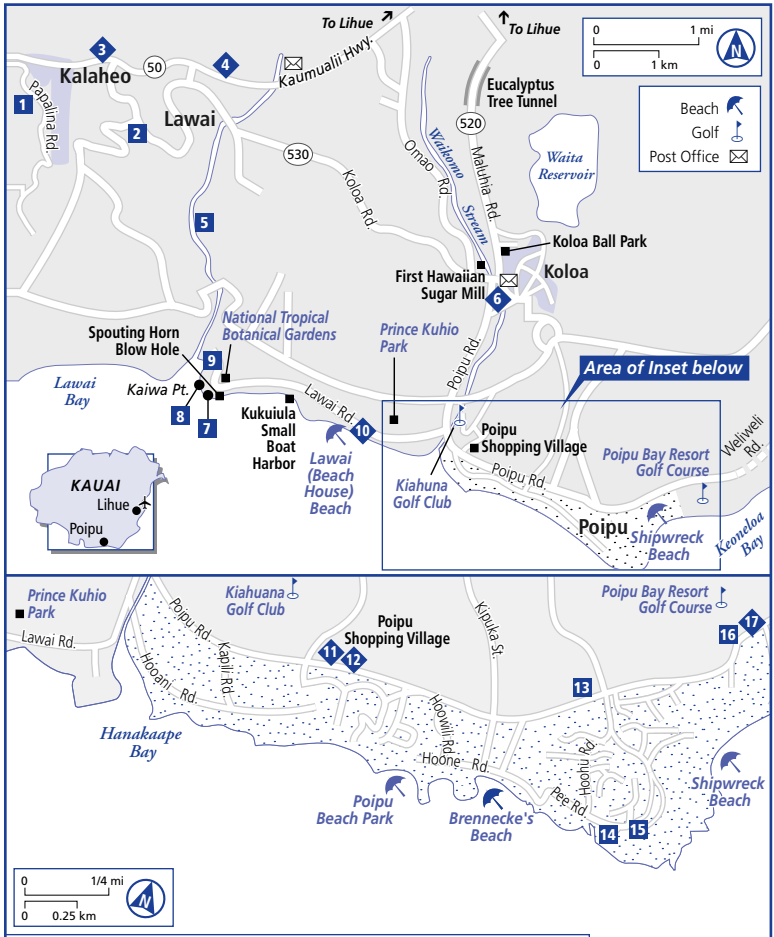
$$ One of the better Poipu deals for a single person or couple is **Kauai Cove Cottages** (2672 Puuholo Rd.; ☎ 800/624-9945 or 808/651-0279; www.kauaicove.com), which offers cheerful, nonsmoking lodging for $105 to $135 per night. The three self-contained studio units are essentially the same, although only one, the Hibiscus, supplements the shower with a bathtub. The full kitchens are well stocked with cookware, and lush landscaping makes each unit's adjoining patio—complete with a barbecue grill—very private. The four-poster queen-size beds and bamboo furniture aren't especially comfortable, but that's a minor concern when sandy Poipu Beach and Koloa Landing, a popular snorkeling area, are right outside your door. The managers supply towels, chairs, and a cooler so you can linger on the sand. This clean property is ideal if you're seeking some seclusion but still want to be in the thick of things at Poipu.

$$ Although some Native Hawaiians consider its location—an extinct volcanic crater known as Piha Keakua (place of the gods)—inappropriate for resorts, **Poipu Crater Resort** (2330 Hoohu Rd.; ☎ 800/367-5004 or 808/742-7260; www.suiteparadise.com) with 30 two-bedroom units, can be a good, reasonably priced choice for families. At 1,240 square feet, these high-ceilinged units won't seem claustrophobic during longer stays, and they have the full kitchens and the electronic devices expected in a modern home (TVs have premium channels). The small and low-key resort has a big pool and lighted tennis courts, and it's just 700 yards from the sandy shores of Shipwreck Beach (Keoniloa Bay). Be warned that the shore break can get a bit rough for little kids. The condos rent for $115 to $137 per night, depending on the length of your stay. All the units have large windows, which look out on the well-tended grounds.

$$–$$$ The **Poipu Plantation Resort** (1792 Pee Rd.; ☎ 800/634-0263 or 808/742-6757; www.poipubeach.com) is a hybrid vacation rental and B&B. Three bedrooms, each with a large, modern, well-functioning private bathroom, and a honeymoon suite with a sitting-room fireplace and private lanai, may be rented in the charming main house, a nicely restored 1938 plantation-style home. Nine one- and two-bedroom cottages—all of them, like the rooms, cheerful, spacious, and bright—have been built around the house for those who seek more privacy and cooking facilities. The quality of these accommodations and their central Poipu location make them a very good value. The rooms, which range from $120 to $145 and include a full breakfast each morning on a screened lanai, are my choice at this property because of the home's unique character and the high level of personal service. The cottages rent for $100 to $190 per day. While these prices are comparable with some condos in the area, they include the cleaning fee and the setting is friendlier and less crowded than most resorts. Discounts are available for stays longer than 3 nights or booked directly with the office or through the website. Rental-car discounts are offered, too.

$$–$$$ If you're looking for a similar setup to Kauai Cove Cottages (p. 22), but you're traveling with kids or another couple and need more space, **Koloa**

Where to Stay & Dine on Kauai's South Side



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Landing Cottages (2704 Hoonani Rd.; ☎ 800/779-8773 or 808/742-1470; www.koloa-landing.com) is ideal. These are four separate houses on one property, with tropical flowers and shrubbery providing privacy screening. Two two-bedroom, two-bathroom units can sleep four (the second bedroom in each has twin beds; a studio apartment and a one-bedroom unit can accommodate one or two persons). Yes, the boldly colorful tropical decor (one house is named for its decidedly weird, thatched "tiki bar" off the kitchen) and yard art cross the line into kitsch. The bamboo furniture, so uncomfortable and yet unfortunately ubiquitous in vacation rentals, isn't conducive to lounging around. But given their full kitchens, spaciousness, cleanliness, and prime location in the heart of Poipu, these units are a steal at $120 to $185 per night.

$$–$$$$ Adjacent **Poipu Kai** (1941 Poipu Rd.; ☎ 800/367-5004 or 808/742-7400; www.suite-paradise.com) is closer to the ocean and a much larger property, with 306 condos, seven pools, nine tennis courts, and a number of homes and cottages. But it doesn't feel crowded because it's built amid 70 acres of gardens fronting Keoniloa Bay. The comfortable condos range in size from one to five bedrooms, with full kitchens, tasteful tropical furnishings, and private lanais; the three-story structures have no elevator service. The best bets here are the 300-square-foot garden-view economy studios, which rent for $112 to $133 per night. Expect to pay $145 to $245 for one or two bedrooms, which is still reasonable given the location and amenities. Two-bedroom oceanfront units at Poipu Kai run $385 a night, although you can save $50 to $75 off the published rate by booking through ResortQuest's website.

$$$ Another worthy property in this genre is **Garden Isle Cottages** ★ (2660 Puuholo Rd.; ☎ 800/742-6711 or 808/742-6717; www.oceancottages.com), with four one-bedroom units. Tastefully furnished with rattan, tropical prints, and original art, the cottages have full or minikitchens and private lanais to take advantage of the full-on ocean view. Private, quiet, roomy, and clean, these cottages are located on a coastal bluff above the prime snorkeling waters of Koloa Landing, making them my top choice for those who want to be right on the water. Rates range from about $175 to $195 per night, at least a hundred bucks less than oceanfront hotel rooms in the area, with discounts offered for stays longer than a week and off-season bookings. ***Note:*** Credit cards are not accepted.

$$$$ If you're looking to splurge on a luxury hotel stay, book the **Grand Hyatt Regency Kauai Resort and Spa** ★ kids (1571 Poipu Rd.; ☎ 800/633-7313 or 808/742-1234; www.kauai.hyatt.com). This choice property is a huge hit with kids. Its 5-acre swimming pool, with a water slide and tunnels, is Kauai's largest, and includes fresh- and saltwater lagoons. There's also a *keiki* (kids) camp during summer and the winter holidays. The Hyatt is a huge (600-plus rooms), sprawling resort that lacks a beach, although it's oceanfront. The standard rooms, which rent for $395 to $500 per night, are large, with soft, comfy beds, thick towels, and elegant koa-wood accents, but the bathrooms are narrow, and when I visited, the water pressure in the shower was low. The lanais, whether overlooking the thickly vegetated grounds or ocean, are uninspired, small, and stark, with standard wrought-iron railings and plastic furniture. Still, the overall property, which has

three excellent dining spots (including Dondero's, one of Kauai's two best restaurants), four bars, six lounges, and a nightclub, manages to convey the grace and warmth of old Hawaii. If you seek the best on Kauai, this is it.

SOUTH & WEST SIDES

$ Once you leave the Poipu resort area and head west to the communities of Lawai, Kalaheo, and Waimea, lodging prices drop considerably. **Kokee Lodge** (3600 Kokee Rd.; ☎ 808/335-6061; scotts@hawaiilink.net) is a distinctive budget property, operated by the same fine group that runs the much pricier Waimea Plantation Cottages (see below). The 12 rustic cabins with wood-burning stoves (you'll need to buy firewood) are better than tent camping in these chilly, often-wet environs, but I find them too austere for stays longer than a night or two. Still, they're a great place to crash if you want to get in some serious hiking, which is a delightful way to spend a few days on Kauai. They sleep six in bunk beds; if you're not that cozy with your companions, a few cabins have two bedrooms. Bring groceries to prepare meals in the cabin's kitchenette; the Kokee Lodge dining room, the sole food concession in the park, closes at 5pm. The cabins have no phones or TV sets and rent for about $60 a night.

$–$$ The YWCA of Kauai's **Camp Sloggett** (Camp 10 Rd.; ☎ 808/245-5959; www.campingkauai.com/accomodations.html) is another good option if you want to stay amid the trees in Kokee State Park. Facilities range from a grassy field where you can pitch your tent (be sure it's waterproof) to dormitories equipped with bunk and twin beds, kitchenettes, and hot showers, to Sloggett Lodge, a mountain house on the National Historic Register that sleeps 11 and has a big commercial kitchen, an 800-square-foot covered lanai, and a fireplace; you provide the firewood, sleeping bags, and linens. For a large group, the house is a steal, renting for $20 per night per person, based on a five-person, 2-night minimum (3 nights during holidays). For a solo traveler or couple, Sloggett Cabin, which sleeps two, is a great deal. This one-bedroom cottage has a comfy king-size bed, a full kitchen, and a wood-burning stove for just $65 per night, with a 2-night minimum and $25 cleaning fee; bring your own towels. Just remember, this is *Camp* Sloggett, with lodgings tending toward funky rather than luxury.

$–$$ A bit further west on Kaumualii Highway, in sleepy Kalaheo town, **Kalaheo Inn** (4444 Papalina Rd., Kalaheo; ☎ 888/332-6023 or 808/332-6032; www.kalaheoinn.com) rents 14 studio, one-, two-, and three-bedroom suites, and a free-standing house. It can't compete with the style and luxury of Marjorie's (see below), but at rates ranging from $80 to $120 per night, it's a bargain (especially the larger units). Every suite has at least a fridge and microwave; if you want to cook, units 5, 10, 12, and 13 have gas stoves. These are very simple, slightly worn accommodations, but I found them to be extremely clean, and the new pillow-top beds in each room are comfy. Guests have use of barbecue grills, beach towels, mats, chairs, snorkel gear (it's a 15-min. drive to the ocean), coolers, golf clubs (a 9-hole course is just up the street), games, and books. The staff also offers tropical fruit harvested from the grounds.

Neat Freaks, Beware

Bear in mind that island housekeeping and maintenance standards tend to be more relaxed than on the mainland. In other words, prepare yourself: Geckos, bugs, mold, and various little things that don't work, or were never built quite right, might be present to some degree in all but the most luxurious accommodations.

$–$$ If you like Kalaheo, **Classic Vacation Cottages** (2687 Onu Place; ☎ 808/332-9201; www.classiccottages.com) rents nine free-standing units, some of which can sleep up to seven persons, on-site (where there's a hot tub) and in various locations around town. Although each unit is different, they all have antique stained-glass windows, cooking facilities, and TV sets. The studios have counters with stools, rather than kitchen tables; unit no. 5 is spacious and bright. The smaller units rent for $50 to $90. The three houses, at $95 to $150, are particularly good values for families, but no credit cards are accepted. Guests have free use of sports gear and the tennis courts at Kiahuna Swim and Tennis Club in Poipu.

$$ It's easy to linger at **Marjorie's Kauai Inn** (3307D Hailima Rd., Lawai; ☎ 800/717-8838 or 808/332-8838; www.marjorieskauaiinn.com), a calm and tasteful hideaway that's smoke-free inside and out. It's perched on a steep hill that offers stunning views and a thrilling cliff-side pool, but guests under 16 are not permitted. All three rooms have private lanais, great views, and kitchenettes stocked with fresh-baked bread, tropical fruits, juice, coffee, and tea. The rooms are pretty and carefully furnished with comfortable mattresses, quality linens, and many extras—indoor and outdoor dining tables, a minifridge, coffeemaker, toaster and microwave oven, dishes and utensils, a DVD player and small movie library, and books on Hawaiiana topics. With rooms renting for $130 to $160 per night, this is one of the best values in this part of the island. For a special treat, the spacious, octagonal-shaped Sunset View room, with its own hot tub, is worth the extra money. The innkeeper enjoys advising guests on island-wide activities, and the beach is just a 10-minute drive away.

$$ Those seeking to truly get away from it all will enjoy **Coco's Bed & Breakfast** (P.O. Box 690169, Makaweli; ☎ 808/338-0722 or 808/639-1109; www.cocoskauai.com), with its unique setting on a 12-acre estate within walking distance of Pakala's, a secluded beach and choice surf break. For $100 a night—you can save $10 by skipping the continental breakfast, but with no eateries or anything else nearby, it's worth the price—you'll get a very comfortable, clean room with its own entrance in a larger house. The 565-square-foot room has a tiled floor; firm king-size bed; small sitting area with VCR, tapes, and stereo; a well-equipped kitchenette; an adjoining large bathroom with old-fashioned cast-iron tub and shower; and a private patio where you can catch the sunset. Guests can also use the Weber grill, laundry facilities, and hot tub—a great place to stargaze in the

very dark West Side night sky. Kids can sleep on futons on the floor, or you can rent another bedroom across the hall.

$$–$$$$ Down the road, in Waimea, you'll find one of my favorite resorts in all of Hawaii: **Waimea Plantation Cottages** ★★ (9400 Kaumualii Hwy.; ☎ 800/992-4632 or 808/338-1625; www.waimea-plantation.com). I love this place because it's unique, historic, low-key, and real Kauai—with no glitz. It's also the only resort on the West Side. You'll stay in one of 48 beautifully restored historic plantation-era homes, ranging from one to five bedrooms, each with its own personality, sitting porch, modernized large bathrooms (showers are roomy enough for two), cable TV, and telephones. The 27-acre resort is homey and sleepy, with porch swings in common areas, horseshoe pits, a small pool, hammocks strung among the coconut trees, and a long stretch of black-sand shoreline. Due to silt runoff from the Waimea River, the ocean is often murky here but still clean enough for swimming. This is an ideal choice for families, large gatherings, and anyone seeking peace and quiet. A day spa and microbrewery can help you relax, and a small museum tells the story of the Faye family, which owns the resort, and the region's sugar history. E-mail junkies will appreciate the complimentary wireless Internet access in common areas; in-room dataports are available upon advance request. One- to three-bedroom cottages range from $140 to $280 per night; add an extra $60 to $100 for an oceanfront location. The four- and five-bedroom homes, both oceanfront, are $405 and $620, respectively. You'll get discounts when you book select units online. Rates go up about 15% in the high season.

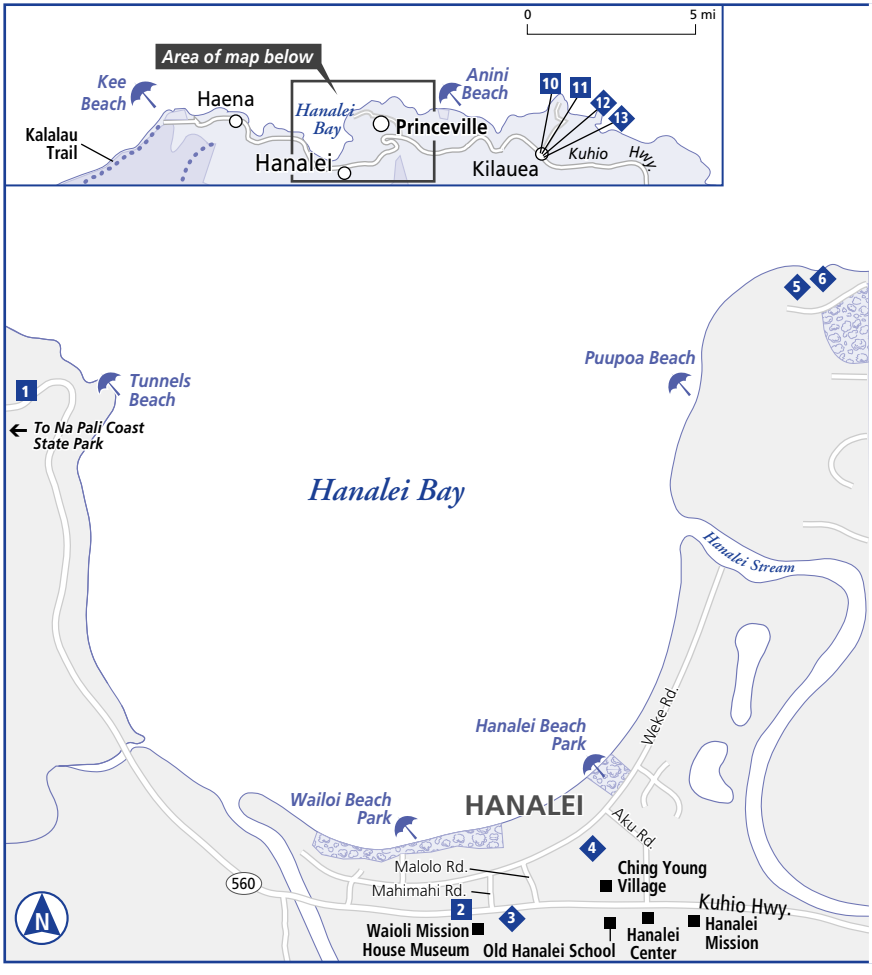
$$$$ Through its Kikiaola Land Co., which owns Waimea Plantation Cottages, the Faye family also rents out the **Kauai Harbor House** (9400 Kaumualii Hwy.; ☎ 800/992-4632 or 808/338-1625; www.kauai-harborhouse.com), a three-bedroom, three-bathroom oceanfront home set in the middle of a tree-shaded, 2-acre lawn adjacent to Kikiaola Small Boat Harbor. It sleeps one to six guests and rents for $368 to $399 nightly, depending on the season; a hefty $190 cleaning fee and 4-night minimum encourage longer stays. Special rates are offered for weddings and for tour and fishing excursions at the harbor. This beautiful home is classic Hawaii and an extremely comfortable setup for families or couples traveling in a group.

THE NORTH SHORE

Condominiums and vacation rentals dominate in this region. The bulk of them are found amid the manicured golf courses at Princeville, a master-planned resort community that is set above, but not on, the ocean. For some, that's a drawback, although I'm more put off by Princeville's sterility and homogeneity. Still, the mountain and ocean views are awesome here, and it has the region's widest selection of accommodations. Other lodging is found in the rural communities of Kilauea and Hanalei.

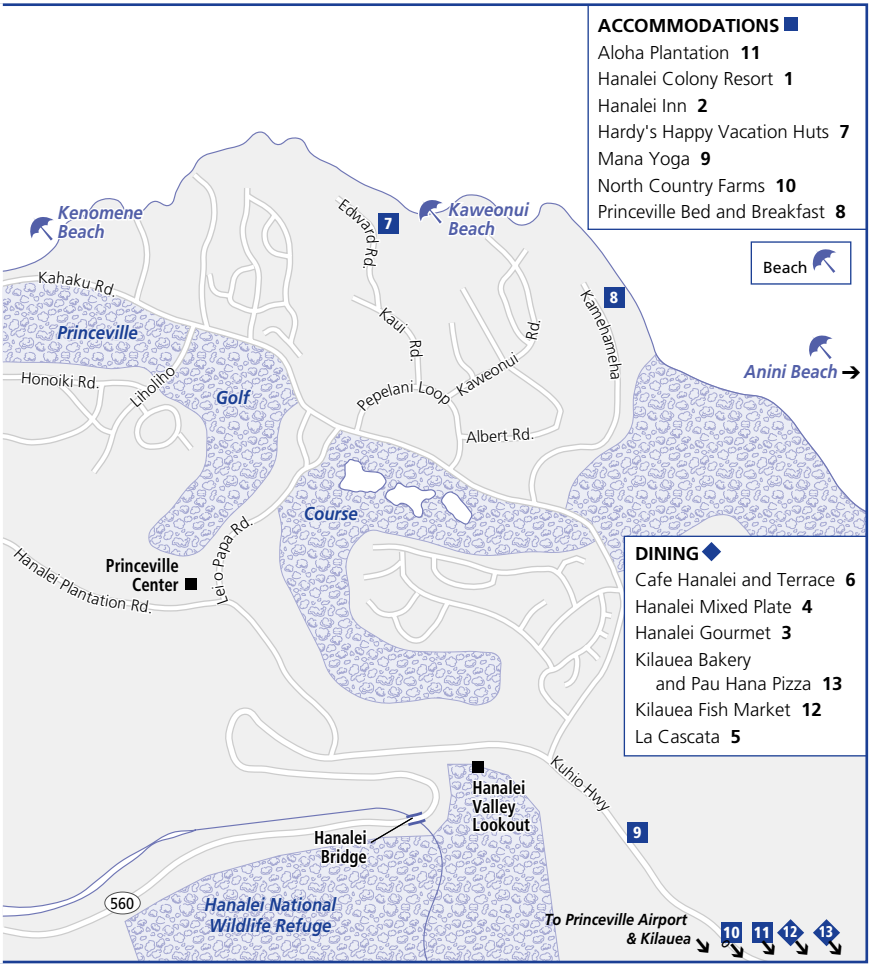
If you choose to stay on the North Shore, be aware that it's remote, located about an hour's drive from the Lihue Airport. If you want to do a lot of island-wide sightseeing, be prepared to put in some serious road time. The restaurants on the North Shore are among the worst on Kauai, despite the area's brisk tourist trade, and it's not pleasant to make the long, dark drive into Kapaa to dine. The

Where to Stay & Dine on Kauai's North Shore



price of everything, from gas to groceries, is higher here than elsewhere on the island, but it is possible to find a few bargains here and there.

$ One of the best deals is **Aloha Plantation** (4481 Malulani St.; ☎ 877/658-6977 or 808/828-1693; www.garden-isle.com/aloha), a plantation manager's house that was built in the 1920s on a residential street in the rural community of Kilauea. The owners rent out two rooms: One has a double bed and shared shower and costs $50 per night; the other costs $60, with two double beds and a private bathroom. Coffee, pastries, and fruit are served each morning on the spacious covered porch; there's also a lanai. The house is a bit dark and worn, and you'll hear traffic noise from the nearby highway (although it diminishes greatly



at night), but if you want a clean, cheap place to sleep and shower on the North Shore, you won't do much better than this. ***Note:*** Credit cards are not accepted.

$$ My personal favorite in these parts is **North Country Farms** ★ kids (Kahili Makai, Kilauea; ☎ 808/828-1513; www.northcountryfarms.com), a slice of real-life Kauai. Lee Roversi rents out two simple but thoroughly clean, comfortable, and reasonably priced ($130 for two; $10 for each extra guest) cottages on her 4-acre organic farm. The farm supplies about 50 families each week with fruits, flowers, and vegetables, which guests can pick. The setting is rural, a 15-minute drive from the beach, and the handcrafted wooden cottages are private, with attached covered lanais, kitchenettes, and a country-tropical decor. The bedrooms have queen

beds, with additional sleeping arrangements possible in the living room. The full bathrooms are complemented with outside showers. Lee is a gracious hostess, supplying cottages with coffee, teas, juice, fruit, granola, and muffins, as well as loads of paperback books and magazines, beach gear, videos, puzzles, and games. Families and those interested in sustainable living will be especially happy here.

$$ Aside from some very expensive oceanfront vacation homes at Anini Beach, you won't find many lodgings between Kilauea and Princeville, except for **Mana Yoga** (Ahonui Place, Princeville; ☎ 808/826-9230; www.manayoga.com). This sweet little vacation rental in a rural subdivision, *mauka* (inland) of Kuhio Highway, offers expansive mountain views. Although it's in the downstairs portion of a home, it's very private, with its own entrance, lanai, kitchenette, and bathroom. The furnishings are basic, but the two-bedroom unit is bright and spacious enough for multinight stays. The futon beds are a little hard, but the place is very clean and worth the $125 per night, especially when occupied by four persons. Your hostess is Michaelle Edwards, a masseuse, talented musician, and yoga teacher who offers massages and yoga classes (which I highly recommend, even if you can't stay in the rental) in a screened studio on the property. Be prepared for some tour-helicopter noise and a 15-minute drive to the beach.

$$ In Princeville proper, the selection increases dramatically, although rates still aren't cheap. One of the best deals is **Hardy's Happy Vacation Huts** (4515 Emmalani Dr.; ☎ 808/826-7168 or 510/444-2913; www.hardyshappyhulahut.com), run by sisters who rent out two condominiums in the Cliffs and Sealodge communities. Both have lovely ocean views, and the second-story Cliffs unit looks down on one of the lush valleys that run through Princeville. The Sealodge unit is older and smaller, with one bedroom and a pleasant window seat; it rents for $120. The Cliffs condo can accommodate four or five guests if some don't mind sleeping on a sleeper sofa or rollaway bed, making it a steal at $150 a night. Both units drop $20 per night for stays longer than a week, and if you book on the Internet, you can get either condo for $100 a night. There's an additional $75 cleaning fee. The Sealodge unit is right next to the pool, which has its good and bad points, but it also has a trail to a secluded beach. The Cliffs condo is a quiet end unit, but it has no ocean access. Both condos are nicely furnished with king-size beds and the usual tropical furniture, and they're thoughtfully stocked with extras ranging from paper goods to movies to beach gear.

$$–$$$$ If you want a bit more luxury or pampering, try **Princeville Bed and Breakfast** ✭ (3375 Kamehameha Rd.; ☎ 800/826-6733; www.pixi.com/~kauai), a very large and luxurious home located on the 6th hole of the Makai Course. This is a true B&B, with the owners living in the house, a full sit-down breakfast served daily, and spacious, well-appointed common rooms. You can choose from two bedrooms, each with a private entrance, for $135 or $145, or rent a spacious suite, replete with whirlpool tub, kitchenette, and king-size beds, for $205 per night. All the rooms have private bathrooms, refrigerators, and TV/VCRs, as well as golf-course, mountain, and distant ocean views. The furnishings are very tasteful and comfortable, and the home is extremely clean, with fruit trees growing in the yard. There's a 3-night minimum stay, and kids are not invited.

Cock-a-doodle . . . Aargh!

Kauai folks tend to go to bed early and get up with the roosters, literally. No matter where you stay, you're likely to encounter roosters serving as living alarm clocks. The problem is, they aren't very good at telling time, so they often start crowing at about 3am—or earlier, on nights with big, bright moons—and keep it up through the day.

Flocks of wild chickens are ubiquitous on Kauai. The ones found in Kokee State Park, where they're protected, are believed to be descendants of *moa,* jungle fowl introduced by the ancient Polynesians. Chickens living in the lower elevations are more likely the offspring of fighting chickens—an illegal but still popular underground betting sport—that managed to escape during Hurricane Iniki in 1992.

In some cases, moa and fighting chickens have interbred, to create a hardy, prolific, and fearless breed of "superchickens" that are very adept at survival. While the flocks of chickens are colorful, and the chicks are adorable, resist the urge to feed these invasive, introduced species.

HANALEI

$ Once you enter the rural community of Hanalei, lodgings become expensive because of their proximity to a desirable stretch of long, sandy beach. But if you're not superfussy, you can beat the high prices by staying at **Hanalei Inn** (5468 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ 808/826-9333; www.hanaleiinn.com). Here, you can rent a room with a private bathroom for $89 or a studio with kitchen for just $10 more; you'll also pay a $10 cleaning fee for a 1-night stay. These are simple, no-frills plantation-style units with wooden floors, ceiling fans, firm queen-size beds, paintings by local artists, and fresh flowers. Some guests might find the accommodations a bit bare-bones for the price, but since you're within a block of the beach, shops, and restaurants, you're paying for a very centralized location.

$$$–$$$$ A bit further down the coast, almost at the end of the road in Haena, you'll come to the very quiet and secluded **Hanalei Colony Resort** kids (5–7130 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ 800/628-3004 or 808/826-6235; www.hcr.com). The densely landscaped 5-acre property is dotted with 48 two-bedroom condominiums. The bathrooms in the units were recently renovated, and the condos are otherwise well maintained and clean, with the standard tropical decor. The full kitchens are essential since there's no restaurant nearby, and the units come blissfully free of TVs, telephones, and stereos. The resort is set on a stunning stretch of sandy coastline that you can walk along for miles, but the water is usually too rough for swimming. There's a modest pool with hot tub, a small day spa offering yoga classes and massage, and a kids camp in summer. This is the really wet part of the North Shore, too, so the units can feel a bit dark and clammy in wintertime. The ocean-view condos, while pricier, are brighter. Unless you're good at entertaining yourself, or happy to hike and beach, you may find this property rather remote, especially during rainy

periods. In any case, it's perfect if you want to leave the world behind. Nightly rates range from $210 to $335, with car-room packages starting around $239. The seventh night's stay is free, and prices can drop 30% during the off season.

DINING FOR ALL TASTES

Although I can't highly recommend Lihue as a place to rest your head, it redeems itself with a number of low- and mid-cost restaurants. You'll find the cheapest and best selection of eateries on the East Side because the places in this area cater to a local clientele. You'll almost always pay more to eat in touristy areas like Hanalei, Princeville, and Poipu, where the price on the menu doesn't necessarily correspond with the quality of the food. That caveat aside, if you want to splurge on a fancy dinner out, you're well-advised to save your money until you get to Princeville or Poipu, where you'll find several restaurants, which I'll get to in a bit, that offer truly stellar food in delightful settings.

Note: Unless otherwise stated, the restaurants listed in the following pages are open at standard times for lunch and dinner.

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Lotus Root Juice Bar & Bakery (Kapaa, $, 39)

Average entree price: $ = $9 and less; $$ = $10 to $15; $$$ = $16 to $21; $$$$ = $22 and up

EAST SIDE: IN & NEAR LIHUE

In Lihue many restaurants cater to the business crowd and close before dark. But if you're sightseeing, it's quite likely you'll find yourself cruising through town during daylight hours, looking for breakfast or lunch. And you'll be in luck, with a choice of some great little "no dinner" eateries that I wish were in my neighborhood.

$ One of my all-time favorites is **Kawayan Cuisine** ✭ (1543 Haleukana St., Lihue; ☎ 808/245-8823; weekdays 10am–6pm), a tasty oasis in the Puhi Industrial Park, across from Kauai Community College. I love the outdoor dining area, with shade trees and flowering vines on lattices. The menu offers clean, home-style Filipino cooking; pork or chicken adobo, *pancit guisado* and *pinkabet*—two meat- and vegetable-laden ethnic specialities—curries, fried rice, noodles, and fresh vegetable dishes are just some of the choices on a regularly changing menu. You can choose one to three entrees and make a mixed plate for under $7. For dessert, try a shave ice, the local version of a snow cone.

$ In downtown Lihue, you can't do better than **e.b.'s Eats** (3–3142 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ 808/632-0328; weekdays 7am–6pm), which is across the highway from McDonald's—and a world away from fast foods. The decor is smart, even campy—a new look for Kauai—but cute. Best of all, owner e.b. can cook, and she uses quality ingredients. Baker Miguel turns out excellent muffins, quiche, scones, coffee cake, and other goodies ($1.25–$3.95) daily, making this a good stop for morning or afternoon coffee. At lunch ($6.95–$7.95), the hearty salads are a filling meal: Try the BBQ chicken salad made with black beans, corn, cilantro, and tortilla chips, or the crunchy Waldorf, with candied walnuts, Gorgonzola cheese, and grapes added to the apples. Sandwiches range from roast beef with horseradish mayo to roasted veggies and goat cheese on focaccia bread (my favorite). You can also make a meal from home-style side dishes including lasagna, meatloaf, and macaroni and cheese ($3.50–$4.95) or a host of unusual salads (like wheat berry tossed with red onions and carrots in a balsamic vinaigrette under $3 each. Service is friendly but slow, and the small dining room can get quite warm midday. Traffic noise also detracts, but the food is worth bearing it—or solve the problem entirely by ordering takeout.

$ At **Hana's Restaurant** (Rice Shopping Center, 4303 Rice St., Lihue; ☎ 808/245-4002; Mon–Sat 7am–3:30pm), you'll find another owner/chef—in this case, Hana Habu—in the kitchen. She cooks up her native Korean specialties, like *mandoo* (fried meat dumplings), *kalbi* beef (marinated and grilled in traditional Korean style), meat and fish *jun* (pan fried and served with a flavorful sauce on the side), and several vegetarian entrees. Rounding out the menu are local favorites like oxtail soup and shrimp tempura, all at prices ranging from $5 to $7. The dining room is small and simple, but you should be getting used to that by now.

$ If you want to sample a good mix of local-style cuisine, **Dani's Restaurant** (4201 Rice St.; ☎ 808/245-4991; Mon–Sat 5am–1:30pm) is the place to do it. The dining room is big and spare; you're here for the food and the prices ($3.80–$7.50), not the ambience. If you want to eat Hawaiian food without doing the luau thing, order the *laulau* (pork and taro leaves wrapped in ti leaves and steamed) or kalua pig, slow-roasted in an underground oven. Alternately, go with Japanese—*tonkatsu* (pork cutlet), teriyaki beef, or fish-cake omelets. You'll also find standard American fare, but everything is served with rice. ***Note:*** Credit cards are not accepted.

$–$$ Right in the same neighborhood is **Garden Island Barbecue** ✦ (4252 Rice St., Lihue; ☎ 808/245-8868), another personal favorite. It's open at night, but whenever you go, it's busy. The utilitarian dining room doesn't look like much, but the good smells wafting from the kitchen take your mind off the decor. This popular restaurant is well managed, with pleasant, efficient, and quick service. You often get your food in less time than it takes to decide what to order from a menu of several hundred Chinese dishes, as well as a range of local plate specials, burgers, and sandwiches priced from $4.50 to $9.95. If they have a fish special, order it. The roast pork and duck are also superb.

$–$$ Another bargain eatery that stays open for dinner is **Okazu Hale** (4100 Rice St., Lihue; ☎ 808/245-6554), just down the street at the Ace Hardware Annex.

Don't be discouraged by the hole-in-the-wall appearance: The food is good. This is local Japanese cuisine—simple, tasty entrees like chicken katsu, teriyaki chicken, miso fish, and daily specials for $5.95 to $8.95. You can trust that the sashimi and sushi are fresh, and they're a good deal with a top price of $9.95. You can eat at one of the few small tables or buy your food to go.

HEADING NORTH OF LIHUE

$ Leaving Lihue and heading north, you have the option of following one of two highways: Kapule or Kuhio. I recommend the latter because it will take you through the tiny old plantation town of Hanamaulu, where **Café Aina** ✭ (3–4251 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ 808/245-2536; Wed–Mon 6am–2pm) is worth a stop. Owner/chef Nalani Kaneakua does everything, although she sometimes has counter help; service can slow down if things get busy. But she takes pride in her cooking, which is a distinct blend of local cuisine, Pacific Rim, and health food. For breakfast, order coffee drinks from the espresso bar, then try one of the frittata specials, waffles with real maple syrup, or eggs with tempeh bacon. There's a big selection of tropical fruit smoothies, too. For lunch, my picks are fresh-fish tacos with homemade salsa, any one of the towering salads, or the "Eggyveggy," a satisfying compilation of grilled red peppers and eggplant, warm goat cheese, and organic greens. The top-priced item here costs $8.50. Sandwiches—turkey, ham, pastrami, falafel, hummus, and grilled tofu—are less than five bucks. The small dining room is very basic and casual but friendly, with games and books inviting you to linger.

RESTAURANTS FROM WAILUA TO KAPAA

When you hit the Wailua-Kapaa corridor, you're in Kauai's dining hotspot. You'll find lots of restaurants, many of them local-style, and very few of them budget-busters. Most are simple, casual eateries, but, unlike restaurants in Lihue, they're nearly always open for dinner.

$ If you're looking for authentic Hawaiian food, there's only one choice: **Aloha Diner** (971-F Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/822-3851). This small, decidedly austere

After-Hours Eats

A word of advice: Don't dawdle, or you might miss dinner. It's difficult in Kauai to find any meal, much less a good one, after 8pm. For that reason alone, **Oki Diner** (3125 Kuhio Hwy., Lihue; ☎ 808/245-5899; **$–$$**), the only place on the island that stays open until 1am, is worth a mention. It's cheap—two people can have dinner for under $15—and the local-style menu has a pretty good selection. When available, the dim sum are good, and if you want to try *laulau* and kalua pig, the Hawaiian plate is decent. You'll also find breakfast items, sandwiches, burgers, beef stew, teriyaki chicken, and the like. The baked goods are better than the entrees, but it all tastes fine when everything else is closed.

Bring the Kids

Ohana (family) is the basis of the Hawaiian culture, so it's no surprise that *keiki* (kids) are welcome in restaurants everywhere on Kauai. This takes a lot of the pressure off folks traveling with young children, as even crying kids won't generate stink eye from other diners. Instead, local patrons and restaurant staff tend to do whatever they can to put the smile back on baby's face. High chairs and booster seats are widely available; children's menus are less common, especially at local restaurants, where kids eat what adults do and just bring home their leftovers.

eatery doesn't look particularly auspicious, but the food is good and cheap, with full meals under $9. I especially like the squid or chicken luau, cooked with coconut milk and nutritious, spinachlike taro leaf. Other good choices are *pipi kaula* (smoked beef) and kalua pork, served with *lomilomi* salmon and fresh, not sour, poi. Order a combination plate to get a sampling. Don't be afraid to ask about the menu; the waitstaff is accustomed to dealing with the uninitiated.

$ I rarely visit the touristy Coconut Marketplace, which is why I never knew the **Barefoot Café** (4–484 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/821-0004) existed until a friend mentioned it was one of her favorites. I tried it and understood why. The food is fresh, well made, interesting, and cheap ($4–$8.95), and portions are hearty. I like the salads, which you can order in half portions or fortify with fish or chicken, and my friend adores the wraps, which reflect Thai, Mexican, and local influences. Grilled meat and chicken, served on plates or skewers, are smoky and moist. Vegetarians will find a few entrees, too. You can take out or chat with the husband-wife chef/owners while eating at one of the pleasant little tables in front.

$–$$ **Ono Family Restaurant** (1292 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/822-1710; daily 7am–2pm) is our one pick that doesn't serve dinner; service stops after lunch. I prefer breakfast here, if I can get a table, and preferably one outside so I can watch for friends passing by on the road. This little cafe has lots of tropical country charm, and it's popular with locals as well as visitors. Prices range from $5 to $10 for omelets—take a chance and try one with kimchi, Portuguese sausage, and fried rice—and for gourmet concoctions like eggs Canterbury (poached eggs with ham, turkey, Jack cheese, tomato, hollandaise sauce, and mushrooms on an English muffin), banana macadamia-nut pancakes, breakfast burritos, and such standard lunch fare as burgers, sandwiches, salads, and soups. As I said, breakfast is the better choice.

$–$$ Just down the road from the Coconut Marketplace, you'll find **Mema Thai Chinese Cuisine** (Wailua Shopping Plaza, 4–369 Kuhio Hwy.; Kapaa; ☎ 808/823-0899; no lunch on weekends), which is prettier and more elegant than you might expect given the reasonable prices. Two can eat well here for under $30. Excellent Thai and Chinese dishes are served on linen tablecloths, and blooming orchids

everywhere create a charming Asian-garden ambience. Nightly specials featuring local produce in season and fresh fish are always good choices. The fragrant, rich curries run from mild to fiery hot.

$–$$$ Across the street from Mema Thai Chinese Cuisine, **The Whole Enchilada** (Kinipopo Shopping Center, 4–356 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/822-4993; closed Sun–Mon) has emerged as one of the best Mexican restaurants on the East Side, and certainly the lowest priced. It features tacos and enchiladas made with shrimp, scallops, chicken, beef, or pork ($6.50–$11). The signature "whole enchilada," a platter loaded with tacos, enchiladas, quesadillas, nachos, and salad, is the highest-priced item at $18, but it can easily feed two. The burritos, hefty two-handers, just as their name promises, are packed with beans, cheese, rice, and your choice of meat—a great deal for $4.50 to $5.95. The quality ingredients are reliable, the service is casual but gets the job done, and you'll walk out with money in your pocket, and most likely some leftovers, too. The small dining room has an inoffensive south-of-the-border decor, but I prefer the outdoor tables.

$$–$$$ The last good choice in this area is the landmark **Wailua Marina Restaurant** (Wailua River State Park, Wailua Rd., Kapaa; ☎ 808/822-4311; Tues–Sun). To avoid the crowds who catch the tour boats to the Fern Grotto, come here for dinner or a late lunch. The food is popular with locals and visitors and the portions border on humongous. Besides, the riverfront setting is unique in the state, imparting a soothing, relaxed flow to the service and ambience. Entrees range from $10 to $21, and if you've got an appetite, you'll definitely get your money's worth. The signature dishes are an inches-thick stuffed baked pork chop and fresh ahi (tuna) stuffed with crab, both of which I recommend, as well as the steamed river mullet, a classic island fish dish.

KAPAA

$–$$$ Heading north again, into downtown Kapaa, you'll come to **Blossoming Lotus** ★★ (New Pacific House, 4504 Kukui St., Kapaa; ☎ 808/822-7678; www.blossominglotus.com), which could very well be the best restaurant on the island in terms of quality ingredients and distinctive taste. And in the area of consciousness, it's unsurpassed. Owned by a workers collective, this is the only restaurant in Hawaii to achieve national "Green Certification" for its eco-friendly practices, including composting and using biodegradable takeout packaging; and its cuisine is organic vegan. But don't worry, you won't find a holier-than-thou vibe in this gourmet restaurant. It's a friendly place, with nightly entertainment in the pleasant, high-ceilinged dining room decorated with Buddha images and rich, muted colors. The food is absolutely divine: creative, fresh, healthful, and packed with flavor. For lunch, the nori wraps filled with veggies and the live food pâté du jour are favorites of mine, as is the tangy barbecue sandwich made with seitan. The hearty spanikopita and roasted-red-pepper curry are sound dinner choices. Lunch entrees run about $10, and dinner selections are very reasonable at $12 to $20. Save room for a slice of pie or, better yet, the delectable kava brownies. Organic beers and wines are available.

The same folks also operate the **Lotus Root Juice Bar & Bakery** (4–1384 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/823-6658), an ideal snack stop. Try the yummy vegan ice

cream, a fresh-fruit smoothie, or a cup of tea with a fresh piece of pie or cake. Best of all, it's good for you. The outdoor tables face Kapaa's main drag, a better choice than a small, stuffy dining room.

$$–$$$ If you're hankering for something with a bone, **Scotty's Beachside BBQ** (4–1546 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/823-8480; Mon–Sat) is just up the street, on the top floor of a new building directly across from Kojima's. It's got a great ocean view and plenty of space, but somehow the ambience jars rather than gels. Maybe it's the 1950s rock 'n' roll playing a little too loudly, or the high-gloss wooden tables. The important thing is, they know barbecue, the real kind, where the meat is spiced and smoked for hours, then served with tangy and/or hot sauces. You won't find barbecue as good as this anywhere else on the island. Besides a pile of pork, beef, or chicken, you'll get your choice of tasty side dishes; I like the crispy coleslaw and moist cornbread. Dinner entrees run about $20, and they're worth it. You can also order smoked-meat sandwiches and burgers for lunch for under $7.95. It can be tough to find a break in the traffic to get back on to Kuhio Highway from Scotty's, but be patient; someone will let you in. Be sure to wave.

$$–$$$ Another place I want to mention before leaving the East Side is **Hukilau Lanai** (4–484 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/822-0600; Tues–Sun, dinner only). It's in the Coconut Marketplace, tucked away off the lobby of the Beachboy resort, but don't hold that against it. On a nice evening you'll want an outside table. The torch-lit dining lanai looks out across manicured lawns to the ocean. Inside or out, it's really a very pleasant spot to linger with a meal, and the food doesn't disappoint. The emphasis is on local ingredients, prepared in satisfying, distinctive ways. Signature entrees, priced at $13 to $22, are shiitake-mushroom meatloaf, sugar-cane shrimp, and Mongolian baby back ribs. I usually order the fresh fish—they often have choices not widely found in island restaurants, like opah and wahoo, both moist and delicious—or pair the creamy-sauced sweet-potato ravioli appetizer with a green salad chock-full of colorful raw veggies. Share if you must, but do try the warm cake made from Big Island chocolate or the Kauai goat cheese crème brûlée for dessert.

THE NORTH SHORE

Once you leave Kapaa and head north, restaurant pickings get mighty slim. For reasons I've never fully understood, given the brisk tourist trade in Princeville and Hanalei, the North Shore is plagued by a dearth of decent eateries. Restaurants tend to be overpriced and average at best, but they start looking more appealing against the alternative of a 45-minute drive to Kapaa. And there are two fine restaurants that are worth a splurge.

$–$$ In Kilauea, the first true North Shore town, you can either order a pizza from **Kilauea Bakery and Pau Hana Pizza** (Kong Lung Center, Keneke St., Kilauea; ☎ 808/828-2020) or stop by **Kilauea Fish Market** (4270 Kilauea Lighthouse Rd., Kilauea; ☎ 808/828-6244), where you'll find wraps, plate lunches, salads, and daily specials made primarily with fresh local fish. The fish market seems expensive for the simple fare, with most items about $11 to $13, and the bottled drinks are way overpriced. The fish wrap, served in a red flour tortilla, tastes very good,

but it's too big and sloppy to hold. You order at a counter and then wait a good piece for your food, which you can eat at an outdoor table or take away.

The gourmet pizzas served at **Kilauea Bakery** aren't cheap, either, but they are excellent, with chewy sourdough crusts. The Big Blue—topped with smoked fish, capers, and tomato slices—is dynamite, as is the Spartan, with its salty feta cheese and Kalamata olives. Soups and salads round out the very limited menu. In the morning, it's a popular spot for coffee and fresh flaky pastries. The best tables are outside, under the umbrellas, but if it's rainy, the seating inside is pleasantly cozy.

$$$–$$$$ Up the road a few miles, and half a world away, lies the master-planned community of Princeville, home to the overly opulent **Princeville Resort** (5520 Ka Haku Rd., Princeville; ☎ 808/826-2760), which in turn houses two of the best restaurants on the North Shore: **La Cascata** (dinner only, reservations required) and **Cafe Hanalei and Terrace.** These are the splurge spots I mentioned (expect to pay $20–$40 per person, without wine). While the food at La Cascata is probably a bit better, I actually prefer **Cafe Hanalei** because of its ambience. It's one of my favorite island dining spots because it has an absolutely gorgeous view of Hanalei Bay and the jagged Na Pali Coast. If the weather is too wet or windy to sit outside, or if it's dark, eat elsewhere. Dining on the lanai is a good part of this restaurant's appeal, so time your meal accordingly, then order either a fresh-fish special or Japanese entree, as they seem to bring out the best in the chef. On Friday nights, go all out for the seafood buffet. You can also eat breakfast here, but the buffet, while bountiful, is uninspired. I enjoy watching the surfers over a long, leisurely lunch; I suggest one of the hearty salads, most notably, the Cobb.

For romantic fine dining, **La Cascata** sets the standard with its terra-cotta floors, hand-painted murals, and *trompe l'oeil* paintings. Some tables have lovely views if you arrive before dark, but the dining-room ambience proves to be a surprisingly stronger lure. The chef works local ingredients into a menu dominated by pasta, fresh seafood, beef, and a superb rack of lamb. The food is innovative—*brodetto di pesce* is a medley of snapper, scallops, clams, and Kauai shrimp served with an Arrabbiata sauce over linguine, and the seared ahi is paired up with artichoke cannelloni, caramelized-onion broth, and toasted pine nuts. The professional, efficient service—not often found on this island—complements the sophisticated food.

HANALEI

Away from the fairy-tale land of Princeville Resort, life returns to normal, which means the search for bargain meals in Hanalei, a town that's generally a big

What to Wear When Out to Eat

Unless you're going to a posh restaurant, don't bother to dress up for dinner; dining is extremely casual on Kauai. But that doesn't mean a swimsuit and bare feet are acceptable. Shorts, T-shirts, and sundresses are the norm, except at luxury hotel dining rooms, like Dondero's (p. 44) and La Cascata (above), where men should wear long pants and collared shirts (aloha shirts are fine).

washout when it comes to dining. The problem is not in the number of eateries but in the mediocrity of the fare, which is all the more grating when it comes with a high price.

$ With that reality in mind, **Hanalei Mixed Plate** (Ching Young Center, 5–5190 Kuhio Hwy., Hanalei; ☎ 808/826-7888; Mon–Sat) is a good stop for a cheap quick bite. You can order a burger or sandwich, but the better choice is to make a mixed plate from a display of local-style hot dishes including Chinese fried noodles, shoyu ginger chicken, kalua chicken or pork, and teriyaki fish or beef. Meals, which run from $6.95 to $8.95, are nearly void of veggies, although you can get brown rice, but the food is tasty enough, and filling. You can sit at a tiny counter out front and enjoy the mountain view, or get your order to go and head for the beach.

$–$$$ Polynesia Café (Ching Young Village, 5–5190 Kuhio Hwy., Hanalei; ☎ 808/826-1999), open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, is tucked up behind Hanalei Mixed Plate. Both establishments use paper plates, but the folks who run Polynesia Café bill their fare as gourmet. It is a step above a plate lunch, but when you step up to the counter to place your order, you might be surprised to see dinner entrees priced from $13 to $21. Although those prices aren't warranted, given the eatery's casual, bordering-on-scruffy setting in a small shopping center, the food is worth it. The breads, buns, desserts, and pastries are freshly baked; they grind their own beef for the burgers; the huevos rancheros and eggs Benedict are excellently prepared at breakfast; and dinner entrees are creative, with a Pacific Rim and Mexican influence. You'll be contacted via pager when your order is ready, and you can eat at one of the outdoor picnic tables (it's okay to bring your own wine), although it isn't the sort of place you'd want to linger, especially on one of those wet, cool nights so common in Hanalei.

$–$$$ Right across the street is **Hanalei Gourmet** (5–5161 Kuhio Hwy., Hanalei; ☎ 808/826-2524), in the historic Hanalei School Center. You'll find decent food for three meals a day, which you can eat inside the small, dark dining room or at a table set on a rambling, covered porch. The lunches—salads and sandwiches served on fresh-baked breads ($6.95–$8.95)—are a better deal than the dinners ($12–$21), which are overpriced for such standard fare as burgers, fresh fish, and pasta with vegetables. There's also a full bar that has live music on weekend nights.

THE SOUTH SIDE

The South Side has quite a few restaurants, some of which are truly excellent, but they tend to be expensive. The simple, casual, local-style eateries common to the East Side are in decidedly short supply on this side of the island, in part because many restaurants cater to the well-heeled tourist crowd.

$ One of the better places to grab a low-cost lunch or early dinner is **Koloa Fish Market** (5482 Koloa Rd., Koloa; ☎ 808/742-6199; Mon–Sat, open until 6pm weekdays, 5pm Sat; takeout only), located on the main drag in Koloa town. They specialize in plate lunches and local-style seafood dishes, such as sashimi and poke (chunks of seasoned raw fish), and the fish is always fresh. Lunch entrees

($6.95–$8.95) may be teriyaki fish, fried chicken, kalua pig, or other hot dishes, all served with rice.

$–$$$ Closer to the South Side resorts is **Poipu Tropical Burgers** ★ kids (Poipu Shopping Village, 2360 Kiahuna Plantation Dr., Koloa; ☎ 808/742-1808). It's one of the best choices in this area because it's open for three meals a day and it's great for families, offering reasonable prices and a wide-ranging menu in a clean, casual, open-air setting. You can order breakfast up until 3pm, and the half-pound gourmet burgers ground from local free-range beef are offered at lunch and dinner, along with salads, soups, and deli sandwiches. This place makes an excellent "burger" from fresh veggies; the mahimahi fish sandwich is another winner. At dinner, fresh-fish specials, steaks, and other grilled meats are added to the menu. Free refills on milkshakes and soft drinks are a pleasing feature. Adults can also order a tropical drink, wine, or beer. This restaurant has proven so successful that they've opened a second one on the East Side in the Coconut Marketplace, **Poipu Tropical Burgers** (4–484 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/823-8808).

$$–$$$ Another restaurant worth checking out in the Poipu Shopping Village is the slightly fancier and much more lush **Keoki's Paradise** (2360 Kiahuna Plantation Dr., Koloa; ☎ 808/742-7534). This plant-filled eatery was designed in the style of a dockside boathouse. If you're looking for a bit of "action," this lively restaurant gets hopping on weekend nights, when it offers live music and dancing. The menu features competently prepared, if uninspired, surf-and-turf cuisine, with appetizers ranging from fresh sashimi and poke to grilled shrimp in a spicy Thai sauce. Steaks, burgers, chicken, pasta, pork ribs, and fresh-fish specials round out the dinner menu, with prices ranging from $7.95 to $22.

$$$–$$$$ If you want to treat yourself to a special dinner in a romantic, ocean-front setting, make a reservation at the **Beach House Restaurant** ★★★ (5022 Lawai Rd., Koloa; ☎ 808/742-1424; www.the-beach-house.com; dinner only) and prepare to enjoy a leisurely meal that showcases Hawaii Regional Cuisine. This is one restaurant where the food is equally paired with the locale, and that's saying something, since the Beach House is tucked between the manicured grass of Prince Kuhio Park, a coastal promenade, and the Pacific Ocean. If the weather is balmy, request a table outside, where you'll have an unobstructed view of the sun slipping into the sea. The dining room, with its oversize windows, also capitalizes on the setting. The menu is sophisticate and original; signature dishes include the hearty paella made with island fish and the spicy fire-roasted ahi. I also recommend the rack of lamb, flavored with a delicate mint-coriander marinade, and the crisp-skinned duck, slow-roasted Chinese-style and served with a little pancake made from risotto and porcini mushroom. The entrees, priced at $18 to $28, are filling, but if you're really hungry, order the crab-cake appetizer; it's crunchy with nuts and served with a snappy ginger-lime papaya and black-bean salsa. Or save room for one of the marvelous desserts. If you want something unique, order the ice-cream sundae made with coconut-butter *mochi,* a Japanese sweet rice cake with a springy, stretchy texture. For something truly decadent, go for the delectable hot chocolate mousse, whose size and richness require sharing.

$$$–$$$$ Equally impressive is **Dondero's** ★★★ (Grand Hyatt Regency Kauai Resort and Spa, 1571 Poipu Rd., Koloa; ☎ 808/742-1234; dinner only). It edges out the Beach House slightly in the kitchen, then takes a back seat for its setting, which is not oceanfront but very lovely and elegant nonetheless, occupying a lushly landscaped courtyard and softly lit, quiet dining room in the luxurious Hyatt. Everything about this restaurant is top-notch, and, in that regard, it stands alone on Kauai. The service is impeccable: attentive, but never hovering; the Italian food is exquisite, with careful attention paid to every detail (chef Vincent Pecoraro whips up his own mozzarella cheese and cures his own olives); and the decor is sophisticated-tropical, with open-air seating a delightful choice when the weather's good. You can easily pass a few happy hours at this restaurant; even if your companion isn't interesting, the food will be. Try the tender lobster piccata, served up on a bed of black (thanks to squid ink) fettuccine, or the rosemary rack of lamb. The light and fluffy tiramisu is a perfect close to the meal. You should expect to pay handsomely for this experience—entrees run from $28 to $43—but it's unlikely you'll leave feeling shortchanged.

WEST SIDE

Unless you're one of the few who stay on the West Side, it's a little too remote to warrant making a special trip out there for a meal. But if you're heading back to your room after a tour boat ride or day of sightseeing in Kokee State Park and Waimea Canyon when hunger strikes, as it likely will, you can take comfort in knowing there are some good places to eat along the highway.

$ For breakfast, lunch, or an afternoon java jolt, stop by the **Kalaheo Coffee Co. & Café** (2–2436 Kaumualii Hwy., Suite A-2, Kalaheo; ☎ 808/332-5858; Mon–Fri 6am–3pm, Sat 6:30am–3pm, Sun 6:30am–2pm). This little diner is busy but manages to retain its friendly service during the all-day rush. They make wonderful giant cinnamon rolls, as well as the usual breakfast fare: pancakes, eggs and hash browns, and omelets ($4.95–$6.95). At lunch the hefty burgers, deli-style sandwiches, and homemade soups and salads ($5.95–$8.95) are prepared to order. You can take your food out or eat in the small, clean, casual dining room.

$–$$ Another Kalaheo restaurant to try is the **Camp House Grill** (1–3959 Kaumualii Hwy.; ☎ 808/332-9755; www.camphousegrill.com). It's open for three meals a day, serving up hearty, country-style breakfasts ($5.95–$8.50) and the usual burger, sandwich, and salad fare at lunch ($5–$7.50). They're good with a grill, whether it's cooking burgers, ribs, steaks, fresh fish, or chicken ($8.95–$14), and anything barbecued is a good bet on this menu. The homemade pie—chocolate macadamia nut—gets a big thumbs up and can be purchased whole or by the slice. The decor is rustic and funky—think screen doors, paper cups, and wooden tables—but it's clean and suits the menu. Another **Camp House Grill** (4–831 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ 808/822-2442), is in the Kauai Shopping Village in Kapaa, but neither the food nor the setting is as noteworthy. In my opinion, if you can't make it to the Kalaheo locale, don't bother.

$–$$ Heading east, the next town is Eleele, where **Grinds Cafe & Espresso** (Eleele Shopping Center, Kaumualii Hwy., Eleele; ☎ 808/335-6027) takes fast

food up a step or two, while managing to keep the prices low and the service quick. The menu, varied enough to suit a family, is the same all day. The pastries and breads are freshly baked, which is a nice touch; and alongside the usual burgers and deli-type sandwiches, you'll also find veggie burgers, a tasty salad made with hearty chunks of chicken and walnuts, fried fish, chicken barbecued with a tangy sauce, chili and rice, and pizza. There's a covered lanai where you can eat, although the parking-lot view isn't especially pleasing, or you can order takeout.

$–$$$ A classic Kauai eatery, the **Green Garden** (Hwy. 50, Hanapepe; ☎ 808/335-5422; closed Tues) is just down the road in the cute historic town of Hanapepe. Like many of the restored buildings in this tiny town, this restaurant has its roots in the sugar industry, occupying what was originally the home of a plantation manager. This family-owned restaurant has been around forever, so they're obviously doing something right. Part of their success undoubtedly comes from the place's superlush setting, hence the name, and the warm, friendly service. The food is dependably good, although not outstanding in any way—aside from the delectable homemade desserts, most notably the lilikoi chiffon pie. The dinner menu (entrees run $12–$18) is fairly broad, with some Hawaiian and Asian influences. I like to order the fresh mahimahi, lamb, or chicken grilled over the local kiawe charcoal. Tour buses stop here at midday, so the dining room can be busy and noisy. You'll do better with a late lunch or dinner.

$$–$$$ Way out west in Waimea, you'll find **Wrangler's Steakhouse** (9852 Kaumualii Hwy.; ☎ 808/338-1218; Mon–Sat), where the food and decor follow an Old West cowboy theme apropos for these parts. The restaurant is housed in the historic Ako General Store, which has been lovingly restored. Ask for a table on the back deck, which is really nice on one of those warm, starry nights so common in Waimea. The wooden booths and tables are simple and rustic, and the room is furnished with *paniolo* (cowboy) props like saddles, and even an old stagecoach. If you're a history buff, you'll enjoy the *kaukau* lunch—a sampling of meat, rice, condiments, and other goodies served up in a two-tiered metal pail that's just like the ones used by plantation hands to transport their meals to the sugar and pineapple fields. The vegetable tempura is crisp and light; carnivores will be pleased with a 16-ounce steak grilled with garlic, capers, peppers, or a teriyaki sauce. A few fish, chicken, and pasta entrees ($12–$20) round out the simple menu. The gift shop is worth a browse, too, since it's stocked with distinctive toys and crafts, many of them made in Kauai, which you won't see in other island shops.

WHY YOU'RE HERE: KAUAI'S BEACHES

Kauai is internationally known for its beautiful beaches, which come in every size, shape, and color: white, green, buff, black, and brown. You'll find crescent-shaped hideaways, long, narrow ribbons edging sheer sea cliffs, and broad expanses that stretch for miles and miles. Some beaches have coral reefs offshore, offering protection from the waves and opportunities for snorkeling. Others face the open ocean, making them more suitable for surfing and boogie boarding. Nearly always, they're wonderfully uncrowded, and sometimes blissfully deserted—just the way I like it.

Beach Rule No. 1

"Never turn your back on the water," is one water-safety rule drilled into the head of every local child, and it's a maxim wise adults heed, too. Waves can come up unexpectedly and knock you off balance if you're not watching the water. During periods of giant winter surf, people have actually been swept out while walking the beach. Always wear fins when boogie-boarding; never swim or snorkel in rough waters. And keep a close eye on your *keiki* (children). Water wings and other flotation devices *cannot* be trusted to protect children in the sea. If you have any questions about activities appropriate to a certain beach or current water conditions, ask a lifeguard or local resident, or inquire at a dive shop. If you ever feel uneasy, get out of the water. Don't take chances.

Each beach has its own personality, which can change dramatically between seasons, and from one day to the next, depending on where the surf is breaking and how the winds are blowing. Beaches on the South Side are typically calmer during the winter, when giant surf often pounds the North Shore. Conditions flip during the summer months, although south swells never reach the legendary heights of North Shore breakers.

WATER SAFETY & RESPECT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Before I turn you loose on the beach, you need to know that Kauai has more drownings than any other island—averaging one or two each month. Even experienced swimmers won't want to underestimate Kauai's powerful waves and currents, which grow stronger during periods of big surf and heavy rain, when swollen rivers race to the sea. There's another reason, too, to stay out of the murky waters that linger for a couple of days after a storm: They're favored by sharks. So exercise caution. Many remote beaches lack lifeguards, and if you're lucky enough to get rescued by a local, it still takes a long time for an ambulance to arrive with medical care.

Aside from water dangers, you're generally pretty safe on any Kauai beach, even if you're a solo beachcomber. The car you left in the parking lot is a different story. Like elsewhere in Hawaii, rental-car rip-offs are a thriving cottage industry on the Garden Island. My advice? Leave nothing inside you would mind losing, and keep the doors unlocked (in the hopes that a would-be thief opens a door instead of breaking a window, and then walks away since there's nothing inside to steal).

Kauai waters are rich in marine life, including many animals on the federal endangered-species list: green sea turtles, humpback whales, and super-rare Hawaiian monk seals, which often come ashore to rest and sun themselves on quiet beaches. Please treat all these protected marine animals with respect, and remember, it's illegal to do anything that causes them to change their behavior. That means no swimming after dolphins (they come into bays to rest, nurse their young, and escape sharks, not to commune with humans); no riding sea turtles,

which can catch viruses from human contact; and no getting chummy with a monk-seal pup. The mom might give you a nasty nip.

Snorkelers and divers will have a chance to see some of the approximately 680 species of fish that live in locals waters; about 30% are endemic, meaning they are found nowhere else in the world. It's not advisable to feed these wild creatures, as it encourages dependence on people and can upset their digestive systems. Avoid stepping on reefs when snorkeling, as this damages the slow-growing, living coral—and potentially exposes you to a painful sting from a *wana,* or sea urchin.

Since I'm dispensing advice, here's another nugget for you: Seek shade whenever possible. The sun is intense, especially near the water, and it's very easy to burn. Trust me, you'll pick up color even when wearing sunscreen and a hat. When you've lived in the tropics for a while, the idea of intentionally suntanning—especially at midday—seems like madness.

Beach etiquette is the final issue that needs to be addressed. Kauai folks are not accustomed to having people plop down right next to them when there's open beach all around, so maintain a space bubble. If you happen to see fishermen with poles or throw nets while you're strolling the beach, detour *mauka* to avoid walking between them and the sea, and don't swim nearby. Otherwise, you risk scaring away the fish that many locals depend on for food. And if you see them bringing in a catch, don't ask what it's worth. Such questions are culturally insensitive.

BEACHES ON THE NA PALI COAST

Now that you're a little more *akamai* (knowledgeable), it's time to explore the diverse, often wild, and always spectacular coastline that encircles this little green gem in the Pacific. There's only one place to start: the beaches of **Na Pali Coast** ★★★, a 6,500-acre state wilderness park accessible only by boat or on foot. Na Pali Coast, which translates literally as "the cliffs," is comprised of idyllic beaches that front wide and narrow tropical valleys, or lie at the feet of sheer, craggy cliffs plunging into the sea. These are Kauai's most viewed but least visited beaches, as they're typically seen from the boats and helicopters that show tourists this stunning example of nature's handiwork.

Kalalau Trail Beaches

The two Na Pali beaches you're most likely to visit are reached via the 11-mile **Kalalau Trail.** You can hike in 2 miles to **Hanakapiai** ★★★, where the beach opens onto a bay. This short, wide stretch of white sand is framed at either end by unusual rock formations and fronts a lush tropical valley that is wedged in between dramatic mountain ridges, making it one of the most scenic beaches in Hawaii. Unfortunately, it's nearly always unsafe for swimming and has been the site of numerous drownings, so if you're hot, stay out of the sea and instead cool off in the clear freshwater stream that runs through the valley. Also, it's been discovered by many people, and by midday it's usually too crowded for my taste. That's when I either hike out or go *mauka* to find a quiet, shady spot alongside the stream, deeper in the valley.

If you continue on the trail for another 9 miles, you'll arrive at **Kalalau** ★★★, which is both a long sandy beach and a deep, wide, amphitheater-shaped valley. You won't be able to make it in and out of Kalalau in a day unless you're a super athlete, so most folks camp at Kalalau, where they spend their time lounging on

the beach, exploring the verdant valley, or talking with other campers, some of whom have taken up semipermanent residence. Kalalau has a definite counterculture vibe and is generally regarded as clothing-optional, although legally you can't get naked on any Kauai beach. One nice feature is **Hoolea Falls,** which provides a natural freshwater shower at the western edge of the strand. The nearby caves make a cool, sheltered campsite in the summer months; you can also bring a tent to pitch along the shoreline.

You can kayak into Kalalau when the seas are calm (which is rare in the winter months). Some folks drift down the coast to Kalalau and then turn around and paddle back against the trade winds (you'd best have strong arms if that's your plan); others have lunch or camp overnight at Kalalau before continuing on to **Polihale State Park,** where they can come ashore if the shore break isn't too rough. Hopefully, your ride will be there waiting to shuttle you back to your starting point.

Coastal Access Beaches

A half mile west of Kalalau is picturesque **Honopu,** where a lava-rock archway separates two thick patches of sand that often disappear beneath pounding winter surf. No camping is allowed, and while some hardy types do swim in from Kalalau, you'll be a lot safer in a kayak. The next beach is **Nualolo Kai,** which has an extensive reef that in some places extends out 600 feet from shore. The valley has many fascinating archaeological sites, reminding visitors that the ancient Hawaiians once lived and grew taro in all the remote Na Pali valleys. There's no camping at Nualolo, and it's often impossible to land here during rough weather. Some tour-boat companies anchor offshore so their passengers can swim and snorkel in the clear, azure-colored sea.

At the westernmost end of the coastline, and accessible only by boat, lies lovely **Milolii,** once the site of a thriving fishing village. Sheer cliffs tower at each end of a narrow, curving sandy beach that spans nearly a mile of coastline, offering some of the island's best shelling. Camping is allowed, but the rough surf usually deters boaters, except in the summer months.

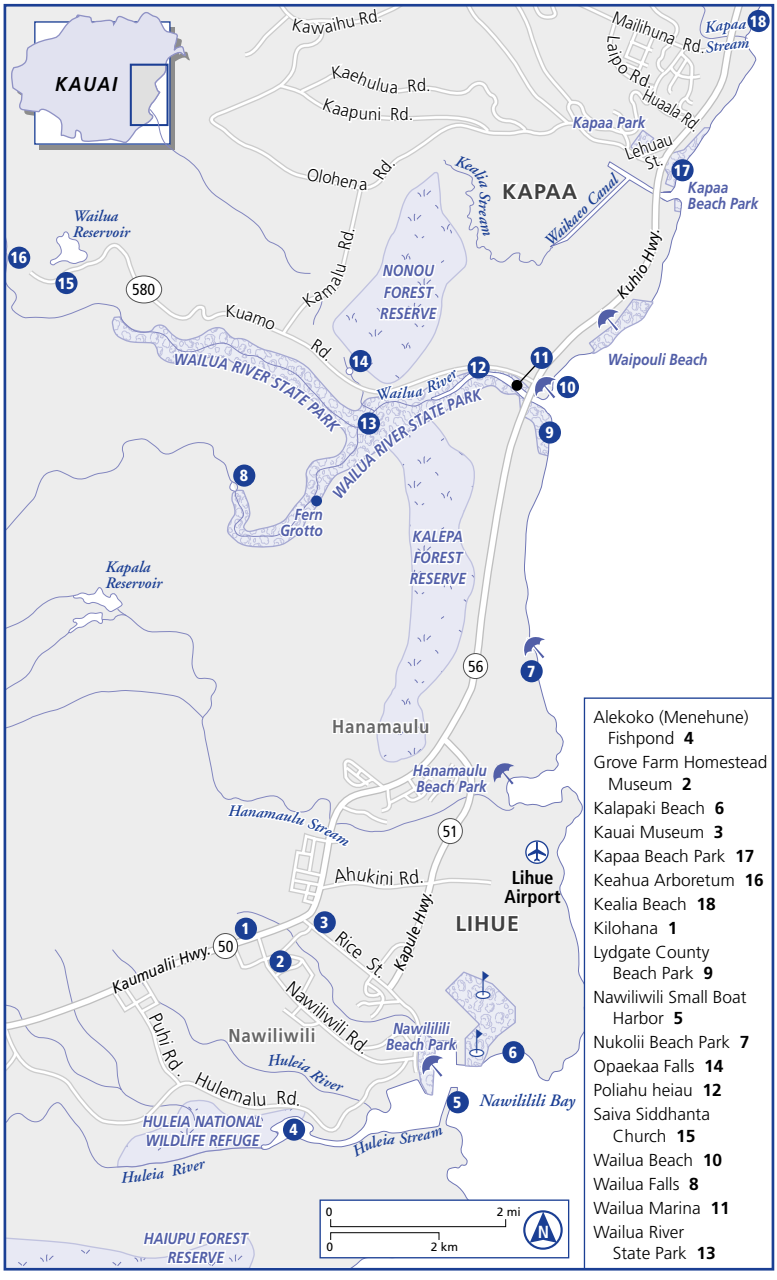
As their wilderness designation implies, Na Pali beaches have no potable water, lifeguards, or services of any kind, except for primitive toilets and an occasional shelter or picnic table. Permits are required to camp in the park or hike beyond Hanakapiai. To obtain them, or to get more information, visit the **Office of State Parks** (3060 Eiwa St., Lihue; ☎ 808/274-3444).

BEACHES ON THE EAST SIDE

The scenic eastern shoreline offers one of the best beach walks on Kauai because you can access it at various points along the Coconut Coast, allowing you to explore different sections without walking the entire length. Monk seals often haul out along here to doze in the warm sand, and you can frequently see green turtles feeding on the reef at low tide. And if you want to watch the sun and/or moon rise out of the sea, a pastime I highly recommend, this is the place.

The coastline here has full trade-wind exposure, which keeps temperatures cool—sometimes too cool for comfortable wintertime beaching—and it's bordered

Beaches & Attractions on Kauai's East Side



Alekoko (Menehune) Fishpond **4**
Grove Farm Homestead Museum **2**
Kalapaki Beach **6**
Kauai Museum **3**
Kapaa Beach Park **17**
Keahua Arboretum **16**
Kealia Beach **18**
Kilohana **1**
Lydgate County Beach Park **9**
Nawiliwili Small Boat Harbor **5**
Nukolii Beach Park **7**
Opaekaa Falls **14**
Poliahu heiau **12**
Saiva Siddhanta Church **15**
Wailua Beach **10**
Wailua Falls **8**
Wailua Marina **11**
Wailua River State Park **13**

by one of the largest fringing reef systems in Hawaii, a feature more pleasing to fishermen than swimmers.

Beaches Near Lihue

Sadly, I can't recommend much about the beaches around Lihue, but the blame for that rests squarely on humans, not Mother Nature. She did a fine job with **Kalapaki Beach,** creating a sandy beach that slopes gradually into a horseshoe-shaped bay that fronts the **Kauai Marriott Beach Resort** on Rice Street (it's open to the public, as are all beaches in Hawaii). It's a pretty place—busy but not overcrowded—with generally fine swimming conditions and a terrific surf break (there's even a tiny surfing museum here). The Marriott provides clean bathrooms, and the outside showers have hot water, which you won't find at public beach parks. So what's the problem? The water quality is often compromised by urban runoff and a nearby sewage-treatment plant that frequently overflows. I'd avoid it if I were you.

Coconut Coast Beaches

Your best bet is to get out of town. Head northeast to **Nukolii Beach Park** (it fronts the **Radisson Kauai Beach Resort**), which marks the start of a 7-mile stretch of coastline edged by a near-continuous ribbon of sand that serves all the resorts and residents of the **Coconut Coast.** It culminates in the long, broad expanse of **Kealia Beach,** a very popular beach that lies along Kuhio Highway, just north of Kapaa. Kealia is a good choice for boogie boarding, surfing, sunbathing, and wading; but services are limited to a portable toilet. The water can be rough, but there is a lifeguard tower.

With one exception—**Wailua Beach,** a half-mile-long sandy crescent on the north side of the Wailua River—the water along this shoreline is mostly too shallow for anything but a dip. If you're traveling with tiny tots, though, that's a boon; you'll find plenty of natural wading pools where baby can happily sit and splash. At **Kapaa Beach Park** (on Niu St., off Kuhio Hwy. in Kapaa), you'll see a protected swimming area known locally as **Baby Beach**—just look for the frolicking *keiki* (children).

Lydgate County Beach Park ★★ kids (on Leho Dr. behind the Aloha Kauai Beach Resort, adjoining the Wailua River) is another windward beach ideal for families, popular with both locals and visitors. It has two big draws: Kamalani, a kid-designed, community-built playground with all sorts of neat art and architectural features; and two protected saltwater pools dug out of the reef. One is *keiki*-size; the other is larger and especially suitable for seniors, people with disabilities, and anyone uncomfortable with the ocean or their swimming skills. It's a perfect place to practice snorkeling. The park has clean restrooms with changing rooms, cold outside showers, barbecue grills, and covered pavilions with picnic tables.

The park grounds have significant cultural value, too. The ancient Hawaiians built a string of *heiau* (temples) and other sacred sites along the **Wailua River,** from the ocean to the summit of Waialeale. The park and hotel occupy the original riverfront site, and you can still see the stone walls of **Hikinaakala,** a traditional place of refuge that granted asylum to lawbreakers who managed to make it inside its borders. ***Note:*** Show respect by not walking within the walls.

BEACHES ON THE SOUTH SIDE

Visitors love South Side beaches because they're so often hot and sunny, which is precisely why I tend to shy away from them. Nonetheless, they have a lot going for them, including wonderful sunset views, and many are within walking distance of most Poipu hotels and condos. The sandy beaches tend to be small pockets, or narrow strips, but the waters near-shore are often calm and protected enough for kids. The region is good for snorkeling, body and board surfing, and boogie boarding.

Poipu Beach Park ★★ kids (at Hoowili and Poipu Beach roads) is a particularly good spot for safe watersports. A short breakwater and sand bars offshore create a large, protected swimming area on one side, although rip currents can form during periods of very big summer surf, making it ideal for boogie boarding. On the other side is an open bay for more serious swimmers, snorkelers, and surfers. Families will enjoy the mix of lawn and sand, playground equipment, picnic tables, cold outside showers, restrooms, and lifeguard station. This is a near-perfect beach, so expect that you'll be sharing it with many other visitors and locals.

Several other nice beaches—none with facilities—lie to the east of Poipu Beach Park, the first of which is **Brennecke,** a choice bodysurfing break with a postage-stamp beach alongside Hoowili Road. At the very end of Poipu Road is **Keoneloa** ★, nicknamed **Shipwreck** for a boat that went aground here many years ago. All that remains of the wreck is its motor, lying in "the long sands" that account for the beach's Hawaiian name. The eastern end is a hot windsurfing spot, while the break is favored by bodysurfers and boogie boarders. It fronts the Hyatt Regency, although the resort is built back from the beach.

Mahaulepu ★★ is the South Side's unpolished gem, noted for its dramatic sea cliffs, reddish sand dunes, and archaeological sites (try to find the petroglyph of a canoe in the rock). It's not uncommon to come across an endangered Hawaiian monk seal—sometimes with a pup—basking on the sand, as green sea turtles swim offshore. I would not recommend swimming here because there's no lifeguard, but for a taste of the unspoiled beauty of Kauai, this beach has few peers.

Heading west of Poipu Beach Park, you'll encounter a series of small beaches suitable for sunbathing, dipping, and snorkeling. The first is **Waiohai Beach,** a crescent of sand behind the timeshare resort of the same name, followed by **Poipu Beach,** a little pocket of sand that fronts the Sheraton Kauai, facing a small bay. It's also used by windsurfers and surfers. The public access is at the eastern end of Hoonani Road, but parking is hard to come by and virtually impossible to find when the surf is up. At the western end of Hoonani Road lies **Koloa Landing** ★, an excellent spot for shore dives and snorkeling, although the rocky shoreline isn't great for sunbathing. You can also snorkel at **Beach House Beach** (on the western side of Waikomo Stream, in front of the Beach House Restaurant). Restrooms, showers, and a very small parking lot are directly across the road from the beach. Don't plan on sunbathing unless the tide is out, as the beach pretty much disappears in high tide. The reef here is popular during summer swells with surfers who ride three breaks known as P.K.'s, Centers, and Acid Drop.

BEACHES ON THE NORTH SHORE

The North Shore has no shortage of scenic sandy shoreline. The mountains are close to the sea here and the landscape is lush, giving parts of the coastline a wild, dreamy, primordial feel accentuated by the frequent appearance of misty rainbows and an ethereal late-afternoon golden light.

The waters here are dramatically affected by powerful northwest swells that roll in and out through the winter and spring months, transforming placid, lake-like waters into thundering 20-foot breakers overnight. North Shore beaches are sometimes closed during periods of extremely large surf, because waves totally inundate the sand, even coming onto the road at times. In summertime it's an entirely different story, especially when the trade winds drop and the ocean is flat, barely rippling as it meets the shore. That's when conditions are ideal for kayaking, snorkeling, swimming, diving, boating, and just hanging out.

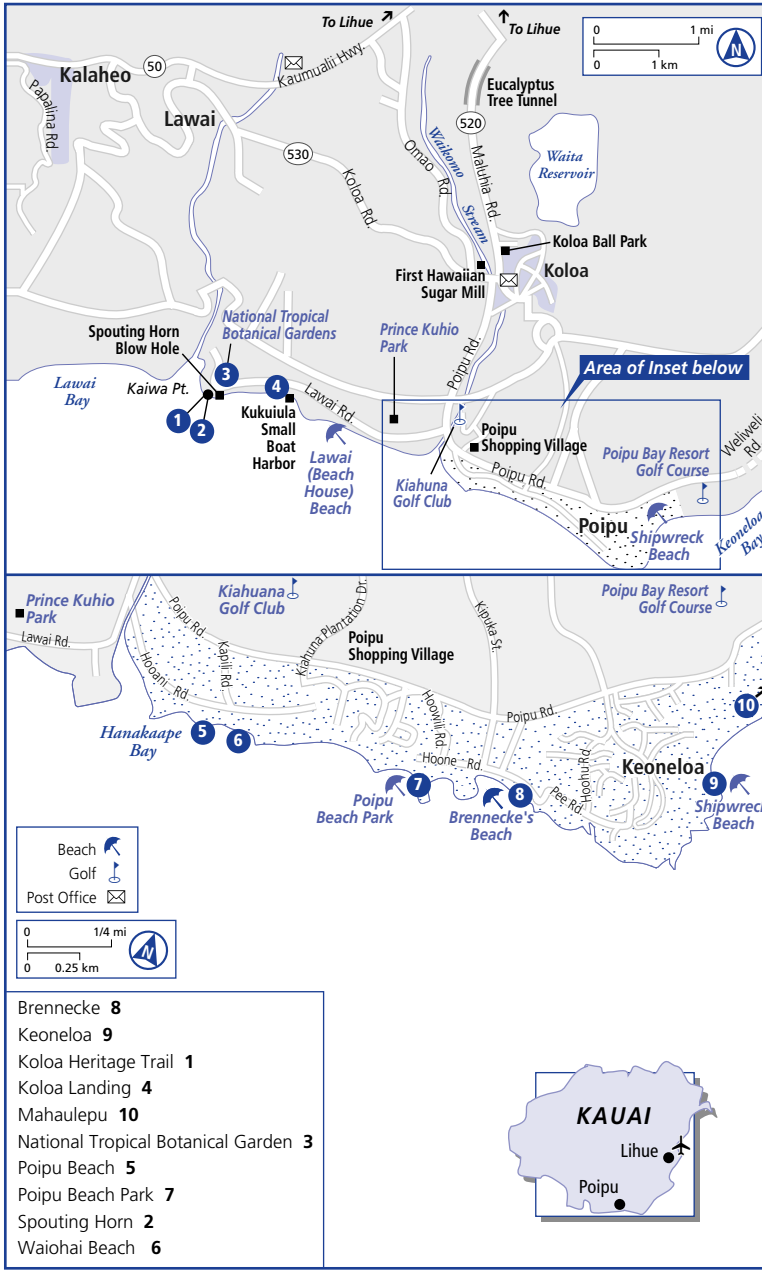
Anini Beach Park ★★ kids (take the northernmost Kalihiwai Rd. off Kuhio Hwy., then turn west on Anini Rd.) is one of the few North Shore beaches that's equally desirable in summer and winter. The shoreline is flanked by a large offshore reef that serves the double duty of creating a protected swimming lagoon—at many points, the water is only 4 to 5 feet deep—and keeping big surf away from the beach. Teeming sea life along the reef makes this the best spot on the island for snorkelers; on the northwest side, a channel in the reef allows divers to plunge 60 feet down for more intense underwater sightseeing. This also happens to be one of the most spectacular-looking places on Kauai, with towering cliffs fronting an aqua lagoon. Although Anini can get crowded, if you're willing to walk a little ways north or south of the park, you can usually find a private little nook where you can spread your towel or mat beneath the shade of a kamani tree. The park has bathrooms, cold showers, a tent camping area, and a boat launch.

Hanalei Bay ★★, a big, beautiful, crescent-shaped bay framed by a 2-mile-long sand beach and large homes, is another popular spot—with good cause. In addition to its large size, stunning mountain backdrop, and view of the setting sun, it's an excellent place to swim, canoe, surf, boogie-board, fish, walk, and jog in the summer. In the winter, it's another matter as giant swells turn this bowl into an oversize washing machine. Another problem: Though Hanalei Bay is a delightful recreation area, it tends to suffer some of the same water-quality problems as Kalapaki Bay, especially following periods of heavy rain.

Three county beach parks have been built around Hanalei Bay, accessible from Weke Road, which runs roughly parallel to Kuhio Highway along the shoreline. All three parks have lifeguards, restrooms, cold outside showers, and picnic tables. The southernmost is **Black Pot** kids, adjoining the Hanalei River. A boat ramp at the end of Weke Road allows small boats to reach the ocean via the river, which is also good for kayaking. Kids enjoy jumping off a pier that juts out into the bay. The waters around the pier are generally calm but can get murky during rainy weather, when there's a lot of runoff from the river. A surf break is beyond the reef, but it's a long paddle from the beach and suitable for advanced surfers only during periods of high surf.

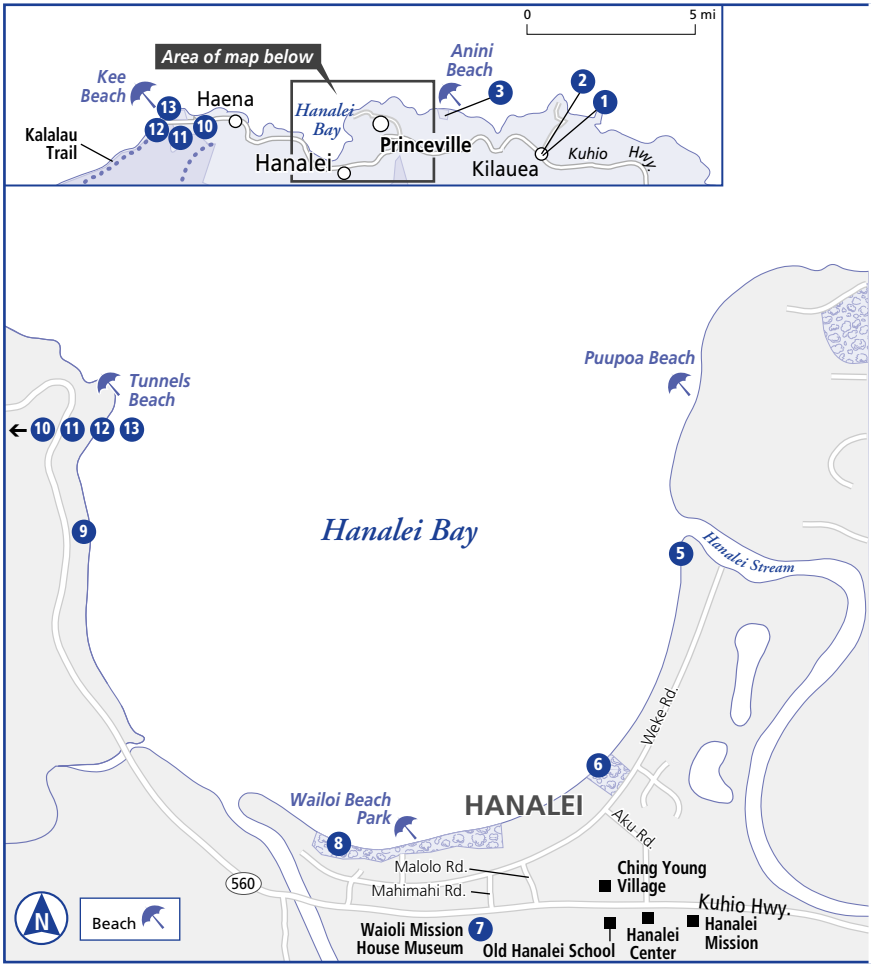
About a block west is **Hanalei Pavilion** ★★, named for the sheltered picnic areas adjoining the parking lot. The pavilions are separated from the beach by a large lawn with picnic tables and barbecue grills. Beachgoers tend to cluster

Beaches & Attractions on Kauai's South Side



Brennecke **8**
Keoneloa **9**
Koloa Heritage Trail **1**
Koloa Landing **4**
Mahaulepu **10**
National Tropical Botanical Garden **3**
Poipu Beach **5**
Poipu Beach Park **7**
Spouting Horn **2**
Waiohai Beach **6**

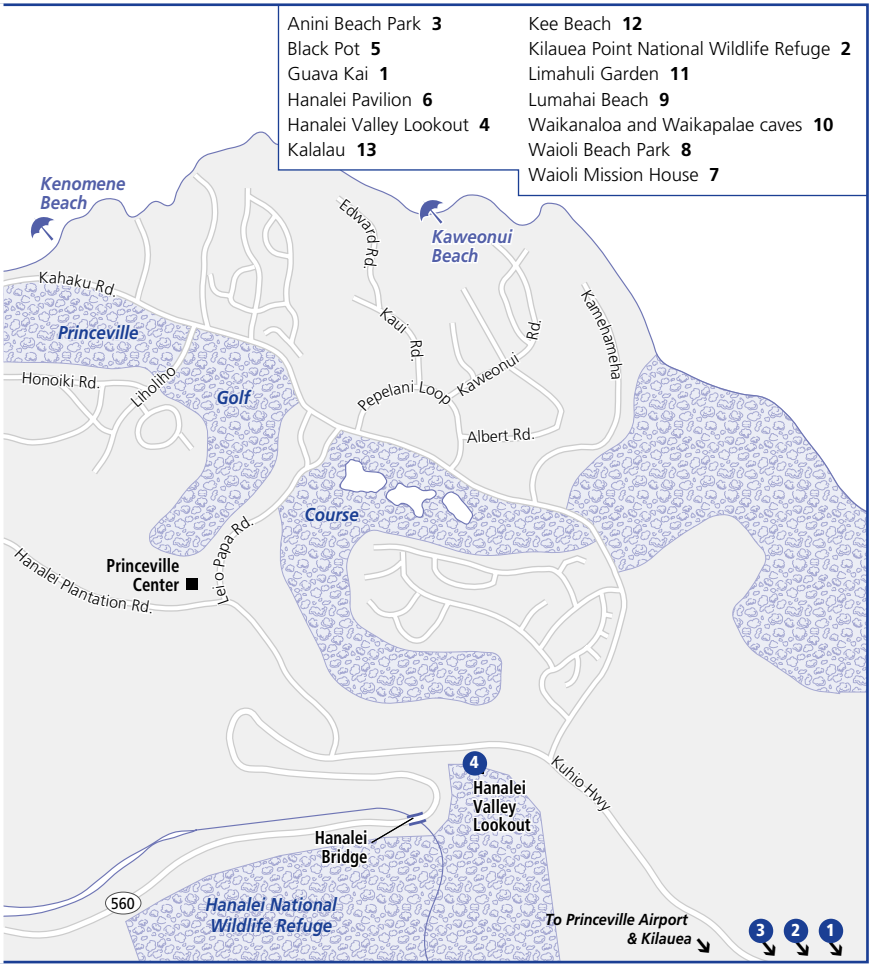
Beaches & Attractions on Kauai's North Shore



around the lifeguard stand. There's often a shore break here, making it suitable for older kids who want to boogie board, but it's not the best choice for very small children.

At the far western end of the bay, you'll find **Waioli Beach Park,** a small park shaded by ironwood trees that account for its nickname, Pine Trees. Currents tend to be strong here, and it can have a snapping shore break, even in summer, so it's popular with boogie boarders and surfers but not the best place for casual swimming. It tends to be less crowded than the other two parks, but it's still very busy when the surf is up.

Although it's not well-suited to swimming or watersports, **Lumahai Beach** ★★★ (on Kuhio Hwy. about 2 miles west of Hanalei town) is one of my all-time



favorites. It's one of the few truly wild beaches left on Kauai, with no houses built along its shores. Swatches of green olivine in the black-brown sand give it a unique color. This is a wonderful place for a long beach walk (though it has no facilities).

At the very end of Kuhio Highway lies **Kee Beach** ★★, a pretty little spot with reddish-gold sand backed by soaring cliffs that has grown far too popular for its own good. Nearly everyone who comes to Kauai visits this beach because it's at the end of the road, but also because it marks the start of the popular **Kalalau Trail.** If you don't mind crowds, there's much to recommend here, including excellent snorkeling and swimming, especially during the summer; the cove and its swimmers are protected from the North Shore's dangerous currents by a reef.

A path on the western end of the beach leads to a *heiau* (temple) dedicated to hula and tended by students from a local *hula halau* (school). It's a sacred spot that should be approached with respect. You'll find the fewest people if you arrive before noon on weekdays.

BEACHES ON THE WEST SIDE

If you're looking for nothing but sun, sand, and surf, head for the West Side beaches. You'll have plenty of room to stretch your legs along a sandy coastline that's the longest in all of Hawaii. At some West Side beaches, the water is murky from river runoff or too rough for swimming. But you can usually find someplace suitable to take a dip, and a bit of privacy, too. The beaches in this area also offer glorious sunsets and views of Niihau, an offshore island owned by the Robinson family and home to nearly 200 Native Hawaiians who still lead a fairly traditional life.

Salt Pond Beach Park ★★★ kids is one of my personal favorites on the island, thanks to its protected swimming areas (including a rock-ringed toddlers' pool), lifeguard station, clean restrooms, cold outside showers, and covered pavilions with picnic tables. There's also a tent camping area. Never crowded, this is an ideal spot for a sunset picnic or swim. And if you're wondering how the beach got its moniker, it's named for the nearby salt pans where the famed *alae* salt is harvested to this day. Locals collect seawater in pans and leave them outside until all that hasn't evaporated is this highly prized reddish, local salt.

I also very much like **Polihale State Park** ★★, though it does have its drawbacks. In the summer it can be unbearably hot, with little shade and flesh-scorching white sand. Kiawe trees grow here, too, and their long, sharp thorns are not compatible with bare feet. The ocean is often too rough for swimming, and you should never leave any valuables in your car here as rip-offs are routine. So why do I award it two stars? It's a beauty, and the long, sandy beach, with its dramatic mountain backdrop, is one of the drier beaches on the island, meaning this is the place to come if it's raining elsewhere. To reach Polihale, a very remote beach, you'll need to drive to the end of Kaumualii Highway, then take an old cane-haul road that can get very rutted and rough, depending on the time of the year and how much rain has fallen since the last time it was graded. You'll find a campground, covered pavilions, and restrooms, but no snack facilities, so come prepared to make a day of it.

THE TOP SIGHTS & ATTRACTIONS

Every trip to Kauai begins in Lihue, whether you arrive by sea or air, making it a good starting point for sightseeing.

LIHUE & ENVIRONS

Except for government offices that befit its role as the capital of Kauai County, downtown Lihue has little to lure you. Its only highlight is the **Kauai Museum** ★ (4428 Rice St.; ☎ 808/245-6931; weekdays 9am–4pm, Sat 10am–4pm; $3), housed in a historic 1920s stone building. You can get through this small museum in an hour or less, but it offers a good introduction to both Hawaiian culture and the plantation camp lifestyle. On the second floor, there's usually a changing

exhibit featuring the work of Kauai artists. The downstairs gift shop is worth browsing, too.

Beyond the museum, the view of the mountains is the No. 1 attraction, with the massive and slightly foreboding **Haupu range** dominating the landscape. These are particularly rugged peaks that no roads or trails traverse, forming a nearly impenetrable barrier between Lihue and the southern coast. One of the best places to view the Haupu range is from the area around **Nawiliwili Harbor,** a small, narrow, compact harbor that's a bit of a tight squeeze for the cruise lines and container ships that dock here.

A short drive away, on the northern edge of the Huleia River, lies the **Alekoko,** or **Menehune Fishpond,** which is not just a pretty sight but an archaeological marvel. It's the oldest fishpond on the island, so ancient that its distinctive stone-wall construction is attributed to the Menehune, who were perhaps Kauai's first inhabitants. It's also the best example of an inland fishpond in the entire state. A National Historic Landmark, the 102-acre property is privately owned, although a few fishermen have permission to go crabbing or fish for mullet. You'll be able to view it from a **roadside overlook** (take Rice St. to Rte. 58; turn right and then left onto Niumalu Rd. and right onto Hulemalu Rd.). It's especially nice in early morning or very late afternoon, when you can hear the birds in the valley. It offers a stunning view of Haupu, too. (Some kayak up for a closer view.)

Nearby is the **Grove Farm Homestead Museum** (Nawiliwili Rd.; ☎ 808/245-3202; tours Mon, Wed, and Thurs; $5; reservations recommended), an estate created in 1864 by former plantation manager George Wilcox, a missionary descendent who found his fortune in sugar. If you've made reservations—which you should—you can join a 2½-hour guided tour of the old house, lovingly restored to give visitors a glimpse into the lifestyle of Kauai's elite in the early days of the lucrative sugar industry. It is by far the most in-depth and interesting plantation tour in the islands. You'll also be taken through the grounds and outbuildings, which offer a fascinating glimpse into the measures required to achieve self-sufficiency on this remote island.

From here, it's easy to catch the two-lane Kaumualii Highway, headed west. With occasional passing lanes, it's a scenic drive. You'll find plenty of reasons to pull off the road, and I advise that you do so at every opportunity. Don't do the island, or yourself, the injustice of viewing it only from the inside of an air-conditioned car.

Just west of Kukui Grove, you'll see a sign on your right for **Kilohana** (3–2087 Kaumualii Hwy.; ☎ 808/245-5608; www.kilohanakauai.com; daily 9:30am–dusk; free admission). It, too, is a former plantation manager's house, built in 1935 by George Wilcox's nephew, Gaylord. The 16,000-square-foot Tudor-style mansion has been restored to house a restaurant and gift shops. It's definitely touristy, with horse-drawn carriage rides, but if you're traveling with young kids, they'll enjoy walking the grounds of this old plantation estate and visiting the many farm animals.

POIPU & ENVIRONS

Folks usually come to this area for three reasons: sun, sand, and sea. All are entirely valid vacation pursuits, and the region consistently delivers, which accounts for its popularity. The resorts of Poipu are a relatively new attraction. For

Fun Facts

- Kauai is the northernmost island in the Hawaiian chain and the westernmost place in the United States.
- Kauai has more species of endangered forest birds than any other island.
- Kauai's landscapes have been featured in more Hollywood films than any other Hawaiian island, including *Raiders of the Lost Ark, Jurassic Park,* and *Blue Hawaii*.

well over a century, sugar was the big deal here. This is where Hawaii's sugar industry was born, the site of Kauai's first plantation. Although the South Side plantations have been closed for 2 decades, quite a bit of land remains as pastureland, or produces vegetables and a more controversial crop: plants, especially corn, that contain genetically modified organisms, some of which have been approved for cultivation and sale and others that are still in the experimental stage.

In Poipu, it's worthwhile to drive to the western end, along Lawai Road, to the **Spouting Horn** ★ kids. This is a natural blowhole formed in the black lava rock that characterizes this very pretty stretch of coastline. The thrill factor of the show depends on the size and direction of the prevailing swell, but even when the geyser is small, it's a lovely sight. Along with the view, you'll hear an odd wailing sound caused by wind going through the other blowholes at this site. A Hawaiian legend, one your kids might enjoy, is that a giant lizard, trapped with a hunter's spear in its gullet, is causing the commotion. A number of vendors sell their crafts in the parking lot (and should be able to recount the tale in more detail); there's a public restroom, too.

Across the road is the visitor center of the **National Tropical Botanical Garden** ★★ at Lawai (Lawai Rd., Poipu; ☎ 808/742-2623; www.ntbg.org), one of the country's top gardens. Meet here for tours of the **McBryde and Allerton gardens** (tours Mon–Sat 9 and 10am and 1 and 2pm; $30; advance reservations required). A guide will lead you on a 2½-hour tour of the Allerton garden, the former summer home of Queen Emma that was later turned into a private estate, with reflecting pools and statuary and other regal effects tucked among the landscaping. Or, catch a tram (trams depart every hour between 9:30am and 2:30pm; $15) into Lawai Valley, and wander through the McBryde Garden, with its extensive collection of rare and endangered tropical plants (said to be the largest such collection in the world). It's a veritable Garden of Eden and well worth a visit.

Just west of Eleele, watch for the **Hanapepe Valley Lookout** ★, a roadside rest stop that overlooks the deep, wide depths of this fertile river valley. Taro, a traditional wetland crop, is still grown in this rugged valley, which has plenty of wild, wide-open spaces. It's a lovely, peaceful sight that definitely warrants getting out of your car to take a look. Equally appealing is the old farm town of **Hanapepe,** which has two parts, the less interesting of which lies along Kaumualii Highway.

The historic **Main Street** forks off on the north side of the highway at a hillside covered with vibrantly colorful bougainvillea. Along its few blocks you'll see old wooden buildings, some of them restored and now in use as shops, restaurants, and galleries displaying the work of the town's growing population of artists. It's fun to poke around here; park your car and browse on foot.

The West Side is still firmly rooted in agriculture and is one of just two places in the state where you can see a sugar plantation. **Gay & Robinson,** a longtime family company, farms the land around two communities that are mere wide spots in the road: **Makaweli** and **Kaumakani.** Stop in at the **small museum and visitor center** (turn left on Kaumakani Ave., just west of Kaumualii Hwy.'s mile marker 19, and follow the signs; ☎ 808/335-2824; www.gandrtours-kauai.com; weekdays 11am–4pm, Sat 11am–3pm; free admission) that tells the story of sugar's history on the West Side and the steps involved in cultivation, harvesting, and processing. Artifacts are also displayed. G&R has branched into tourism to help support its sugar operations, and offers several excursions, including a 2-hour tour of its fields and sugar mill. Another scenic tour goes to **Olokele Canyon overlook.** A third takes you on four-wheel ATVs through **Makaweli Ranch.** The tours are quite interesting, and they give you a chance to see things on private land you otherwise wouldn't, including a dramatically rugged coastline that can't be reached any other way.

WAIMEA

The next town you'll encounter is Waimea, which I think is the island's prettiest, in part because it has such a strong sense of itself. It's one of the few communities that hasn't lost substantial ground to the contrivances of tourism and conveniences of gentrification. Like so many other Kauai settlements, it's nestled between the mountains and the sea and bordered by a stream—in this case, the mighty Waimea River. But the similarities end there. This is *paniolo* (cowboy) country—think Old West, island-style—and the landscape is more arid, open, rugged, and colorful than elsewhere on Kauai, with broad swaths of burnt orange, rust red, and mustard yellow running through the dark blue-green of vegetation that covers the mountains behind the town.

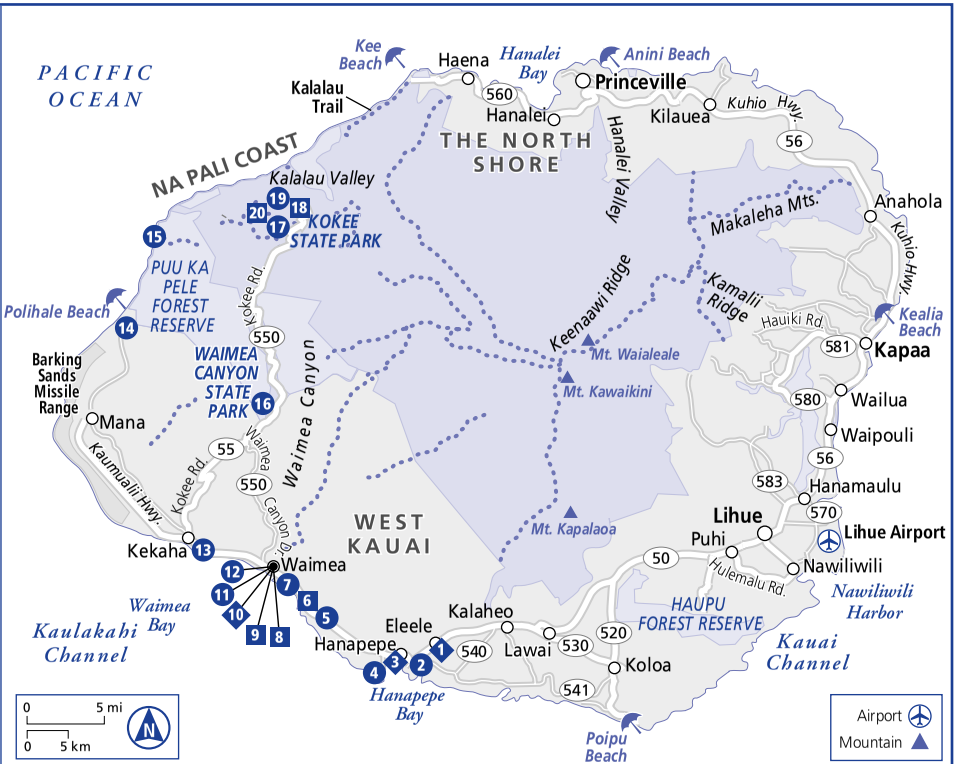
Waimea was a large and thriving community—cultivating taro, sweet potato, and paper mulberry in the expansive wetlands that were later drained to grow sugar—when Captain James Cook arrived in 1798, ushering in an era of unprecedented change that dramatically altered both the culture of this island kingdom and its natural environment. A boulder with a large plaque marks the spot where Cook first went ashore in the Hawaiian Islands on what is today Lucy Wright Beach Park, on the western bank of the Waimea River.

If you like historic buildings, the **Waimea United Church of Christ** (4548 Ola Rd.; ☎ 808/338-9962), previously known as the Waimea Foreign Church, was constructed in 1859 from sandstone blocks cut from the reef and transported to the site by bullock cart. You can pick up a map that shows all of Waimea's historic sites at the **West Kauai Technology & Visitor Center** (9565 Kaumualii Hwy.; ☎ 808/338-9957; daily 9am–6pm). This facility was built with federal development

ACCOMMODATIONS ■
Camp Sloggett **20**
Coco's Bed & Breakfast **6**
Kauai Harbor House **8**
Kokee Lodge **18**
Waimea Plantation Cottages **9**

DINING ◆
Green Garden **3**
Grinds Cafe & Espresso **1**
Wrangler's Steakhouse **10**

ATTRACTIONS ●
Gay & Robinson Sugar Museum **5**
Hanapepe Valley Lookout **2**
Kekaha Beach **13**
Kokee Natural History Museum **19**
Kokee State Park **17**
Milolii **15**
Polihale State Park **14**
Russian Fort **7**
Salt Pond Beach Park **4**
Waimea United Church of Christ **11**
West Kauai Technology & Visitor Center **12**
Waimea Canyon **16**



funds after Hurricane Iniki to attract both high-tech tenants and tourists bound for Waimea Canyon and Kokee State Park. The center is small but its exhibits are sophisticated, informative, and well done, delving into Kauai's geology and natural environment, as well as high-tech activities on the island. Other exhibits and artifacts, as well as classes in lei making and a walking tour, celebrate the Hawaiian culture and West Side lifestyle.

Across the river lie the remains of a fortress that was built in 1815, when Kauai's King Kaumualii was on chummy terms with the Russian-American Company. Russian military forces occupied the fort until 1817, when Kamehameha I expelled all Russians from the Kingdom of Hawaii, after that government foolishly tried to claim it as a colony. Hawaiian soldiers used the stone fort—built from lava rocks in a star-shaped formation—until 1864, when it was taken out of service. You can visit the 17-acre **Russian Fort Elizabeth State Historical Park** at any time; watch for the entry road on the *makai* side of Kaumualii Highway, just east of Waimea town. The ruins themselves aren't much to look at now, but if you take a short walk toward the ocean, you'll be rewarded with a lovely view of the western coastline. The public restrooms—always in short supply on Kauai—are another welcome feature. The park is rather arid, but there's usually a nice wind, making it a good spot for a picnic on a hot day. This could be your first up-close encounter with Kauai's red-clay soil, which has stained all the vegetation and buildings in the park a dark orange.

WAIMEA CANYON & KOKEE STATE PARK

While Waimea has its own special charms, it also serves an important role as the gateway to two very special areas on Kauai—Grand Canyon look-a-like **Waimea Canyon** and woodsy **Kokee State Park.** These public lands offer great hiking, bicycling, hunting, camping, and sightseeing, and they give you a chance to experience the island's cool uplands, wet and dry forests, and water-sculpted interior.

You can catch a road that will take you up the mountain either in Waimea town or Kekaha. Because both routes are scenic, I like to take one going up and the other coming back down, so the drive is varied. It's easier on your car to go up the steep, curving **Waimea Canyon Road (Hwy. 550)** out of Waimea, and down the more gradual incline of **Kokee Road (Hwy. 55),** which will deliver you to Kaumualii Highway at Kekaha. The scenery is good from the get-go and doesn't let up anywhere along the drive, unless you happen to encounter dense fog or clouds. Some of the overlooks are merely wide shoulders on the road, where you literally can hang over the canyon rim, while others, such as the **Waimea Canyon Lookout,** at an elevation of 3,120 feet, have restrooms and large parking lots for tour buses.

I recommend stopping at every scenic overlook on Kauai, especially the ones you encounter on this upcountry drive. Each one offers a different view of the canyon, and the colors of the rock walls shift through various hues of purples, greens, blues, grays, and reds as the light changes through the day. Rainbows, waterfalls, soaring birds, and drifting mists often make an appearance, so you'll want to keep your camera handy.

After passing through Waimea State Park, you'll climb a bit higher to **Kokee State Park.** Much of its acreage is impossibly lush, standing in sharp contrast to the stark, rocky landscape of Waimea Canyon. While the park has many warm, sunny days, I've found floating mists, light drizzle, and chilly breezes to be more characteristic of Kauai's upcountry climate (bring raingear or at least a jacket and a pair of long pants). That may be because most of this area is rainforest, in the midst of which is the Alakai Swamp, the largest in Hawaii. Look up: A California redwood may be shading your path. It's a recent transplant here, along with Australian eucalyptus. This is also one of the few places anywhere to see the now rare koa tree.

Upon entering the park, your first stop should be **Kokee Natural History Museum** ★★ (☎ 808/335-9975; daily 10am–4pm; free). It's run by the nonprofit Hui O Laka, which provides all the interpretive and educational services available in the park, including guided hikes, workshops, cultural programs, trail-maintenance projects, and Weed Busters—an innovative effort that relies upon volunteer labor to help eradicate alien plants invading the native forest. I was surprised to learn that most of the participants are visitors, who often cite a desire to experience the forest more deeply or give something back to the island.

Water, Water Everywhere

Waialeale is one of the wettest spots in the world, receiving an average of 466 inches of rain each year. When that much water is pouring down a mountain for more than 5 million years, it makes an impact.

Waialeale, Kauai's second-highest peak, fed the Waimea River, which in turn made the stunning Waimea Canyon. This landmark is even more spectacular when you consider how it was created through severe, ongoing erosion. The force of water working constantly on rock eventually carved a crevice that is a mile wide, 3,600 feet deep, and 10 miles long.

A number of hikes, ranging from moderate to difficult, can take you along the rim and down into the canyon. The truly rugged can stay in primitive camps in this wilderness area. But before you head out, remember that what goes down must come back up, and the elevation loss is about 2,000 feet in 2½ miles.

At the summit of Waialeale, the heavy rainfall has created vast bogs where the sparse vegetation grows in dwarfed and stunted shapes, like natural bonsai. These bogs and broad stands of native ohia forest comprise Alakai Swamp, a part of which can be traversed on a wooden boardwalk. The strenuous 6-mile hike ends at Kilohana (which, translated, means lookout). Here, if the weather cooperates, you'll be treated to an absolutely magical view into the impossibly lush depths of Wainiha Valley on the northwest shore. Suddenly, it becomes clear that this is, indeed, a little circle of an island where everything is connected by *wai* (water), which is the Hawaiian word for wealth.

At the museum, you can pick up maps, flora and fauna guidebooks, and helpful hints for hiking **Kokee's 45-mile trail system** ★. There's also a compelling exhibit on Hurricane Iniki, which devastated the island in 1992; stuffed birds, artifacts, and other collectibles that reflect the forest ecosystem; and a gift shop with an excellent selection of natural history books, as well as local arts and crafts. Next door is the rustic Kokee Lodge, which serves simple meals daily from 9am to 5pm, and its adjoining gift shop that specializes in kitschy tourist merchandise.

If you stay on Kokee Road as you leave the park, you'll head straight to the **Kalalau and Puu O Kila lookouts,** with their scenic bird's-eye views of Na Pali Coast wilderness valleys and remote beaches. I often spot native birds—including the vibrant red iiwi and apapane, and the more rare yellow-green amakihi—in the trees that shade these vistas. And during winter months, I've seen whales breach and spout in placid offshore waters some 1,500 to 2,000 feet beneath me. It doesn't get much better on Kauai, or anywhere else on the planet for that matter, so if you feel the urge to hurry, squash it. You don't see natural beauty like this every day, unless, or course, you live or work in Kokee.

THE EAST SIDE

A quick drive on the East Side will take you to two magnificent waterfalls, afford you a glimpse of ancient royal Hawaii, and allow you to visit an other-worldly, modern Buddhist monastery.

With Lihue again as the starting point, head north out of town on Kuhio Highway. As the road dips down into **Kapaia Valley,** watch for Maalo Road on your left. You'll want to take this 4-mile side trip to **Wailua Falls** ★★, a magnificent cascade featured prominently in the opening segment of the old *Fantasy Island* television show.

Warning: The area surrounding the falls is very wet, overgrown, and treacherous, so stay behind the railing. A number of people have drowned or fallen to their deaths while attempting to hike here.

When you've had your fill of rainbow-hued tumbling water, backtrack to Kuhio Highway and make the odd jog from this highway to Kapule Highway, which you'll take north to Kuamoo Road (Hwy. 58). You'll end up in the heart of Wailua, which is itself the heart of Kauai, due to its direct connection with the replenishing rains of **Mount Waialeale.** In honor of this relationship, the ancient Hawaiians built seven rock-walled *heiau* (temples) that followed the river's course from the summit of Waialeale down to the sea. Bell stones, birthing stones, and other features linked to traditions and protocol practiced by the *alii* (nobles or royals) are found in this rich, fertile river valley favored by Hawaiian royalty. It's one of the most extensive archaeological complexes in the Hawaiian Islands, and much of it is accessible for public viewing.

The easiest sites to find and visit are **Hikinaakala,** a walled city of refuge at the mouth of the Wailua River, adjacent to Lydgate Park, and the **Poliahu *heiau,*** which lies about 2 miles up Kuamoo Road. Its unusual stonework is similar to the style used in the Alekoko Fishpond, prompting speculation that it, too, was built by the Menehune. From here you can easily walk *makai* to *pohaku hanau,* a two-piece stone that blessed all who were birthed upon it. Parents often tucked a newborn's umbilical cord into the cracks of nearby *pohaku piko* to gain insights into the child's destiny.

Etiquette at Sacred Sites

Although Westerners tend to lump all ancient structures under the heading of archaeological features, many were traditionally used for religious purposes. Native Hawaiians view these as sacred sites that should be approached with humility and respect.

If you're interested in viewing such sites in a *pono* (righteous) manner, please follow these simple rules, which apply throughout Hawaii:

- Westerners should never leave any sort of offering at traditional sites, even if their intentions are good. Such actions are considered highly inappropriate and a nuisance to native practitioners who must dispose of the crystals, feathers, rocks, religious paraphernalia, and other items left behind by misguided visitors.
- Do not sit, stand, or walk on rock walls.
- Never move rocks anywhere in Hawaii and do not pile or stack them to create your own landmark.
- It's inappropriate to picnic, sunbathe, drink, have sex, urinate, or litter on, in, or near any ancient enclosure.
- Resist the urge to ring bell stones because some have become extremely fragile with age.

The *heiau* is across the highway from a scenic overlook that offers a view of stunning **Opaekaa Falls** ★, so named for now-scarce freshwater native shrimp that were once so abundant they could clearly be seen in the cascading waters.

Kuamoo continues on for another 7 miles, passing the homes, pastures, and subdivisions of Wailua Homesteads—where a rather unlikely group of residents live: the monks who reside at a Hindu monastery tucked away at the end of a side street on the south side of Kuamoo. Formally known as **Saiva Siddhanta Church** ★★ (107 Kahololele St.; ☎ 808/822-3012; weekdays 9–11am; free admission), it's built on lovely grounds with views of the Wailua River and valley. The small community of resident monks is deeply contemplative and almost entirely self-sufficient, but they also play an active role in island life, performing a number of useful deeds that benefit Kauai. A massive temple is now being constructed at the monastery, its granite blocks intricately carved by hand in a remote village in India, then shipped to Wailua and reassembled by still more traditional craftsmen. It's all quite fascinating, and the monastery has what can only be described as a very good vibe.

As you travel north on Kuhio Highway, see if you can make out the profile of a "**Sleeping Giant**" in the 1,241-foot-high **Nounou Ridge;** it's easy to spot once you reach the **Coconut Marketplace.** Legend holds that the huge creature will one day awaken and rise from his mountaintop slumber.

THE NORTH SHORE & THE ROAD TO HANALEI ★★★

This is Kauai's don't-miss road trip. Every view along the drive is spectacular, as the landscape turns damper and more lush, and your sense of entering a Garden of Eden grows more intense by the mile. The cliff-hugging roadway that stretches from the Hanalei bridge to the pavement's end at Kee Beach is a National Historic Scenic Highway, a designation that could help keep its many charms intact. Chief among them are the old one-lane bridges that cross the region's numerous waterways, and the low lava-rock walls that line the roadway in places with sheer coastal drop-offs. The Na Pali Coast is inarguably one of the Pacific's grandest visions.

The rounded summit of **Crater Hill,** an ancient coastal cinder cone, marks your approach to Kilauea, a former sugar town struggling to retain its rural roots in the face of heightened pressure to expand and urbanize. On the outskirts of town, you can follow Kuawa Road *mauka* for about 2 miles until it ends at the gates of **Guava Kai** (☎ 808/828-6121; daily 9am–5pm; free admission), the biggest guava orchard in the world. The company cultivates some 480 acres of guava trees and also processes the sweet and tart, pink-fleshed fruit into pulp and juice. You can wander among the low-growing trees and browse in a slightly kitschy visitor center that sells jellies, juices, syrup, marinades, and other products made from guava. This isn't an especially compelling attraction, but if you're curious about island agriculture—or hungry—you can cruise through here in a half-hour or so. The mountain scenery is pretty, too.

Architecture and history buffs will want to make a stop at Kilauea's **Episcopal Church** (on Kilauea Lighthouse Rd., just beyond the Menehune Foodmart) to check out the elaborate stained-glass windows, black lava-rock construction, and churchyard cemetery dating back to the 1800s. The doors are generally open during daylight hours, and visitors are welcome. As you travel slowly down Kilauea Lighthouse Road, you'll pass more of the distinctive stone buildings originally built to house the plantation's managers, dispensary, and store. These quaint structures, currently in use as restaurants and upscale shops, comprise the town's minimalist commercial core, which is centered around the intersection of Keneke Street and Kilauea Lighthouse Road.

While the town itself is worth a look, the big attraction here is the **Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge** ★★★ (at the *makai* end of Kilauea Lighthouse Rd.; ☎ 808/828-0168; daily 10am–4pm; $3 admission), a seabird sanctuary perched on the edge of a sheer sea cliff along a rough and wild coastline. Seabirds spend most of their life on the open ocean, returning to land only to breed and raise their young. These federal lands offer protected nesting habitat that attracts thousands of Laysan albatrosses, wedgetail shearwaters, boobies, great frigates, and other seabirds, as well as Hawaii's endangered state bird, the nene goose. You can see birds nesting on steep cliff faces and flying low overhead, a spectacle that is even more thrilling in late afternoon, when great numbers of seabirds—some with 8-foot wingspans—return to their roosting areas after a day of fishing. In winter months you'll often see whales spouting and breaching offshore, and the panoramic ocean and mountain views are beyond picture-perfect. As in most natural areas, the view changes constantly, depending on the elements, so it's different every time you visit.

The birds share the grounds with a **historic lighthouse** built in 1913 to warn ships away from a small offshore islet called Mokuaeae and the generally treacherous coastal waters. That function is now performed by a free-standing signal light, although the original lamp, outfitted with a clamshell lens that is among the world's biggest, is still operational. The lighthouse is currently undergoing a major restoration intended to allow greater public access to the structure, which previously was opened only on special occasions.

The nonprofit **Kilauea Natural History Association** (on the same site as the refuge, at the *makai* end of Kilauea Lighthouse Rd.; ☎ 808/828-0383; daily 10am–4pm) operates an on-site bookstore that's stocked with an excellent collection of nature, environment, and history titles, as well as children's books and toys. Guided hikes and other interpretive services are offered intermittently. Don't miss this site, unless, of course, you suffer from phobias that make you uneasy around birds or in wide-open spaces.

As you continue to drive north on Kuhio Highway, passing the manicured links of the Prince Course and the entryway to Princeville, a master-planned resort community that functions as the hub of North Shore tourism, the mountains and sea both seem to draw nearer, and the scenery sprouts even more shades of green. Before you head down into Hanalei Valley, stop at the **Hanalei Valley overlook** ✭, located across the highway from the Princeville Shopping Center, for a glimpse of the mountain-framed rural landscape that awaits you.

The region's agricultural value is immediately evident once you cross the **Hanalei Bridge**—which was manufactured in New York City in 1912 and then assembled on Kauai—to span the Hanalei River. It's now on the National Registry of Historic Places. This is a relic, too small to allow tourist buses. Bridge etiquette requires that you allow about four cars to come in the opposite direction before you wave yourself into traffic, so that you, and the cars following yours, can cross. (At this point, Kuhio Hwy. becomes Hwy. 560.)

Deep, wide **Hanalei Valley** has long been a significant food producer on Kauai. Its ancient taro fields—which early missionaries reported as among the most extensive in the islands—were cultivated with rice for nearly a century and then returned to taro in 1961. Kauai now produces about two-thirds of the state's wetland taro, which is milled into poi, the starchy cornerstone of a traditional Hawaiian diet. The taro fields you'll see along the Hanalei River are leased from the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the wetlands as a refuge for endangered Hawaiian water birds.

The traditional crop is also cultivated on private lands around **Hanalei town,** long viewed throughout the state as a near-perfect hamlet with an idyllic, enchanted setting and an old Hawaii lifestyle. In truth, the town no longer lives up to its reputation, as it's experiencing severe culture shock: skyrocketing real estate prices and property tax rates are forcing out longtime residents and dismantling Hanalei's counterculture image, which dates back nearly 40 years to the arrival of the first hippies. Still, one thing has not changed, and that's the town's remarkable locale. Nestled around a large, crescent-shaped bay, with a dense, interior mountain range pressing in close, Hanalei is the quintessential island beach burg, which at least partly explains its perennial popularity. It has a sweet, small-town feel and is easily traversed on foot or bicycle.

Besides the beach and the people-watching scene, Hanalei has few formal attractions other than the **Waioli Mission House** ✰ (Waioli Park, Kuhio Hwy., Hanalei; ☎ 808/245-3202; self-guided tours Tues, Thurs, and Sat 9am–3pm; donations accepted), which was built in 1837 by Hanalei's first missionaries, Lucy and Abner Wilcox. I like this little museum, which you can explore at your leisure on a self-guided tour. The rigid New England architecture and heavy, dark koa wood furniture speak volumes about the tightly controlled missionary worldview, offering insights into their influence on both traditional Hawaiian culture and modern island life.

Following the coastline, you'll pass through the lovely **Waipa, Lumahai,** and **Wainiha river valleys** before reaching a series of **small caves** that can be visited if you're interested in the island's volcanic origins. The first is **Maniniholo,** named for the head fisherman of the legendary Menehune. On the *mauka* side of Kuhio Highway, across from Haena Beach Park, it's more widely known as the **"dry cave."** A bit further west, also on the *mauka* side of the highway, are **two wet caves** marked by a roadside directional sign; park in a small dirt lot across the street. **Waikanaloa** is right alongside the road; adjacent **Waikapalae** is a short uphill walk away on a dirt trail. Legend claims these caverns were dug by Pele, the volcano goddess. Some people swim in these caves, which are fed by natural springs, but I've never been tempted to put so much as a toe in the cold, dark, stagnant waters.

It's hard to imagine a man-made attraction could compete with the scenic splendor, but **Limahuli Garden** ✰✰✰ (Rte. 560, Haena; ☎ 808/826-1053; www.ntbg.org; Tues–Fri and Sun 9:30am–4pm; self-guided tours $10, guided tours $15) holds its own, in part because the mountains here have been weathered into dramatically fluted and spiraled peaks. These give the narrow, verdant valley a primordial, almost ethereal quality that's enhanced by the ancient stone-walled terraces carved into the sloping hillside by Hawaiian taro farmers some 700 years ago. The terraces are still cultivated with wetland taro today, while the surrounding grounds have been landscaped with native and introduced coastal plants. You'll be rewarded with panoramic ocean views from a number of vistas on the walking path. Charles "Chipper" Wichman created this garden and nature preserve on land inherited from his grandmother before placing it under the auspices of the National Tropical Botanical Garden, which he now heads on Kauai. This is one of my favorite spots in all of Hawaii; I can guarantee that you'll never find another place quite like it.

Limahuli Stream runs through the garden and collects in a deep pool, known as **"cold pond,"** alongside the highway, just west of the garden entrance. This favorite hot-weather hangout with local folks is the official start of **Haena State Park.** From this point on, the mountains press in close alongside the road, which skirts boggy lands that once grew taro. The pavement ends in less than 2 miles at a parking lot, with restrooms and cold showers nearby. This busy spot is frequented by folks who wish to hike on the Kalalau Trail or swim at Kee Beach. You can join them, or simply turn around and drive back the way you came, spellbound and subdued from a delightful double dose of natural beauty.

THE OTHER KAUAI

People often ask me about the Garden Island's "secret spots" and "hidden places." The fact is, there aren't any places on this island that haven't been revealed to

tourists, and there isn't one locale that encapsulates the essence of Kauai to a greater degree than any other. But there are things you can do, and authentic experiences you can share, that will bring you closer to local residents and help you understand how we live in—and look at—our island world.

CULTURAL FESTIVALS

In the aftermath of Hurricane Iniki, which hit in 1992, the island's tourism industry was as battered as the landscape. At that time, then-mayor Maryanne Kusaka made a concerted effort to develop local events and market Kauai as the "festival island."

Despite a rather contrived origin, the festivals now held all around the island throughout the year are actually some of the most authentic cultural experiences available to Kauai visitors. Nearly all feature entertainment—most often Hawaiian music and hula—as well as locally made crafts and booths selling plate lunches, shave ice, hot malasada (Portuguese donuts), coconuts, and other local food treats. Admission is usually free or low-cost, making them an ideal outing for families. Children are always welcome at these gatherings, with games and activities planned specifically for them. It's worthwhile to stop at any one of them for a few hours; to avoid traffic jams and crowds, go early or late, as they tend to be busiest midday.

Some are specific to certain regions, such as **Koloa Plantation Days,** a weeklong summertime tribute to the island's agricultural heritage held in the tiny town of the same name that was the home of Hawaii's first sugar plantation. Similarly,

Festival Calendar

Fall and spring are especially popular festival times, although something is scheduled nearly every month of the year. Below is a partial list of the most interesting fests and their usual schedule.

- **February:** Waimea Town Celebration
- **September:** Mokihana Festival
- **October:** Coconut Festival, Queen Emma Festival, Matsuri Festival, Taro Festival, and Pow Wow
- **December:** Lihue and Waimea's annual "festival of lights" parades. The Christmas Fantasy Fair, the island's largest crafts fair, is generally scheduled for the first or second weekend of the month.

For an updated schedule, visit **www.kauaifestivals.com** or check the calendar listings on *The Garden Island* website at **www.kauaiworld.com.** When you're on-island, watch for flyers and posters displayed in store windows and posted on public bulletin boards, or check the event listings in the weekly *Kauai Island News.* KKCR, Kauai's community radio station (90.9 or 91.9 on your FM radio dial; www.kkcr.org), also gives a rundown of arts and entertainment activities following the local news at about 5:45pm on weekdays.

the **Waimea Town Celebration** festival showcases the West Side's cowboy culture and the history of Waimea, a major population center in ancient times and the place where Captain James Cook first set foot in the Hawaiian Islands. Previously known as Capt. Cook's Capers, the event was renamed following opposition from Native Hawaiians who don't consider Cook's arrival a celebratory event. One of the oldest and most popular cultural extravaganzas is the **Mokihana Festival,** a weeklong celebration of Hawaiian music and hula staged at various locations around the island. Highlights include a local composer's concert and a delightful hula competition held under the moon and stars in balmy Kekaha.

Other noteworthy events include the **Kauai Taro Festival,** which showcases Hawaii's most important cultural crop with an outdoor fair at Waioli Park in Hanalei, and **Eo E Emalani I Alakai,** an upcountry cultural festival in Kokee State Park that re-creates Queen Emma's trek into the Alakai Swamp in 1871. The **Kauai Pow Wow** acknowledges the island's Native American residents with 2 full days of tribal dances and drumming at Kappa Beach Park, while the **Matsuri Festival,** held at the Kauai War Memorial Convention Center in Lihue, emphasizes the traditional and contemporary music, art, dance, and food of the island's large Japanese population.

MEET THE ARTISTS

Kauai may be a small, rural island, but its art scene is surprisingly large and cosmopolitan. Artistic types flock to the Garden Island, where the enchanting light, inspiring scenery, and peaceful lifestyle stimulate and nurture their personal muse as they work in a range of mediums, including glass, silk and dyed fiber paper, clay and ceramics, oils, watercolors, pastels and acrylics, beads, wood, metal, mixed media, and photography.

You can view the fruits of their artistic labors in many different places: galleries, crafts fairs, boutiques, specialty shops, restaurants, museums, and public facilities, including the Lihue Airport, the state office building at 3060 Eiwa St. in Lihue, and the Exhibition Hall at the Kukui Grove Shopping Center. But if you really want to delve into the local art world, you'll need to get acquainted with some artists. This can be done by attending art openings and exhibitions held in various places throughout the year or taking a class, such as the free life-drawing course offered every Wednesday afternoon at the **Aloha Center** (3371 Wilcox Rd., Lihue; ☎ 808/245-6996; www.alohacenter.net).

Art Night, held every Friday from 6 to 9pm on Hanapepe's Main Street, is another fun and festive way to hang out with artists who live or show their work on the West Side. All the local galleries host open houses where you can meet the artists who exhibit there, and sometimes watch a demonstration or listen to live music.

You also can visit some artists in the studios where they work. Just be sure to call and schedule an appointment, because many Kauai artists hold additional daytime jobs. The **Kauai Society of Artists** (P.O. Box 3344, Lihue, HI 96766; www.kauaisocietyofartists.org) maintains a directory of local artists that includes photographs of their work, information on where their art can be seen, and contact information for those who accept studio visits and commissions. Another excellent resource on the local art scene is the **Garden Island Arts Council** (P.O. Box 827, Lihue, HI 96766; www.gardenislandarts.org).

Market Days

Every Monday a farmers market starts at noon at the Koloa Ballpark, on Maluhia Road near the entrance to town, while another begins at 3pm at the pavilion in the Kukui Grove Shopping Center in Lihue. On Tuesday there's a 3pm market at the Wailua Homesteads Ballpark on Kamalu Road in Kapaa and a 3:30pm market at the Neighborhood Center in Kalaheo.

The Kapaa New Town Park, at Kahau and Olohena roads, is the site of a 2:45pm Wednesday market. On Thursday the start time is 4pm in the parking lot of the Kilauea Neighborhood Center, on Keneke Street in Kilauea.

West-siders can attend a 9am market at the Kekaha Neighborhood Center on Elepaio Road; another market starts at 2:45pm at Vidinha Stadium in Lihue.

A combination crafts fair and farmers market is held at 9am every Saturday in Hanalei's Waioli Park. If that's too early, you can catch a 10am market in the field adjacent to the Kilauea Post Office.

GOING TO MARKET

At "sunshine markets," local farmers gather to sell their fruit, flowers, and vegetables at prices well below those charged by island grocery stores. And since local produce is harvested on market day or the day before, it's much fresher than the limp lettuce and tired tomatoes that spend 1 to 3 weeks in refrigerated cargo containers while in transit to Kauai.

While those two factors alone make it worthwhile to patronize the sunshine markets, they offer other advantages as well. For one thing, you'll get a chance to see the full array of crops cultivated on island farms, most of which are small and family-owned. It's an eye-opening experience that's guaranteed to introduce you to fruits and veggies you never knew existed. You'll also gain the satisfaction that comes from putting money directly in the pockets of local farmers, which not only benefits individual growers but supports island agriculture overall. And it's a sector of the economy that needs all the assistance it can get.

Be prepared for some pushing and shoving as serious shoppers move quickly through the crowd, grabbing bags of produce and thrusting money into the hands of harried vendors who can barely keep pace. Most items are priced at $1 or $2; savvy regulars come equipped with dollar bills so they don't have to waste a moment waiting for change. It's also wise to bring a few bags to hold your purchases. Within 30 minutes of opening time, the crowd thins considerably. Some farmers who sell out quickly start packing up, while others relax and tidy up their displays. This is the time to "talk story" with farmers and other shoppers, who are usually quite happy to share recipes and tips on determining ripeness and cultivating tropical plants at home.

ACTIVE KAUAI

Remember that planned activities—helicopter rides, kayaking excursions, and sailing—have a downside for visitors. For one thing, they're expensive. And

although you often can save money by booking in advance online, you run the risk of getting to Kauai and finding the weather less than ideal for the activity you've scheduled. Activity booths around the island also offer discounts, but beware that some of the super deals require you to sit through a timeshare sales presentation. Only you can decide if it's a fair exchange.

Activities also require you to begin structuring and managing your time, which is precisely what I want to avoid when I'm on vacation. Part of Kauai's appeal, and magic, lies in just going with the flow, settling in to the island's rhythm, doing what you feel like when the conditions are right. My advice is to avoid overscheduling yourself with activities, and keep entire days free to explore, relax, and escape the clock. When was the last time you allowed yourself that luxury?

On that note, check out our sidebar on p. 74 that highlights body work; I highly recommend you schedule at least one session during your stay. It's an ideal way to begin your visit, helping you drop down a few notches until you slip into island gear, a state of mind that will allow you to more thoroughly enjoy your stay.

HIKING

Kauai has miles of hiking trails to take you along the coast and into the rugged mountains and lush valleys of this largely undeveloped island. You can pick a day hike or spend a few days wandering through Na Pali Coast State Park or Waimea Canyon if you're in good shape. As far as I'm concerned, any time spent on Garden Island trails is well spent. You're traveling at a speed that allows you to take in the smells, textures, colors, sounds, and sights that together weave the marvelous tapestry of Kauai's natural world. Except for the helicopters, you're likely to have a fair amount of peace and quiet, too.

Tips for a safe and pleasant hike: When hiking on Kauai, be prepared for rain and cool temperatures, especially in the mountains, and bring plenty of

Don't Drink the Water

If you're planning any backcountry hiking or camping, be sure to treat the water you collect from streams, springs, or other natural sources. All fresh water in Hawaii is potentially contaminated with leptospirosis, a type of bacteria spread through the feces and urine of cats, rats, pigs, goats, and deer, all of which are abundant in Kauai's valleys and forests. You can also contract leptospirosis through your mouth, eyes, and open cuts on your skin, so be very cautious if you want to stand under a waterfall or take a dip in a cool mountain stream. It's also found in wet pastures, taro fields, and other muddy places.

If you experience brutal headaches, wracking body pain, or any mild-to-severe flulike symptoms after drinking fresh water, seek medical help immediately and be sure to inform your doctor about possible leptospirosis exposure. Antibiotics are effective against leptospirosis, but the bacteria can kill you if left untreated—or make you so sick you might wish you were dead.

water. The best footwear is tennis shoes or light hiking boots, something that gives you traction on soil that tends to be loose and crumbly. Expect that whatever you wear will get wet and likely stained with red Kauai clay, which doesn't wash out.

Don't be misled by one of the narrow, faint paths that often branch off the main trail. These are usually made by pig and goat hunters, who go places you won't want to. Kauai trails aren't always especially well marked, so it's useful to have a **map.** Since most of Kauai's trails are found in the Kokee, Waimea Canyon, and Na Pali Coast state parks, the **Division of State Parks** (3060 Eiwa St., Lihue; ☎ 808/274-3445) is a good resource. It has maps, trail guides, and information about wilderness camping and hiking permits for lands under its domain.

The state's **Na Ala Hele** (www.hawaiitrails.org) project maintains a website with information about *mauka* and *makai* trails and public access ways on each island. **Earthwalk Press** (☎ 800/828-MAPS) publishes an excellent Northwestern Kauai Recreation Map ($8.95; available at www.globecorner.com or the Kokee Natural History Museum), with lots of trails listed.

Kauai's foremost hike is along the world-renowned 11-mile **Kalalau Trail** ★★★, which winds through tropical valleys along the magnificent Na Pali Coast. This strenuous wilderness trek starts at the western end of Kuhio Highway, at popular **Kee Beach,** which accounts for heavy foot traffic along the first 2 miles of the rough and often rocky trail. I like to hike early to avoid the crowds—as well as the heat and humidity, which can be oppressive on a midsummer's day. In 2 miles, or about an hour, you can reach **Hanakapiai,** a tropical valley with a stream running through the middle of it, framed by towering green mountains on one end and a white-sand beach (where it's usually inadvisable to swim) at the other. The trail is often wet and muddy, and there's no drinking water once you leave the trail head at Kee Beach; be sure to carry a bottle of water with you. It's easy to spend a thoroughly enjoyable day on this hike, although children under 10 will likely need to be coaxed to keep going.

If you're in excellent physical condition and have at least 2 full days and camping gear, you can hike up and out of the valley along a steep switchback trail that climbs 2,000 feet. You won't reach sea level again until **Kalalau,** 9 miles further along. In between is **Hanakoa,** a wet valley and stream at the 5-mile mark. Then it's another 6 miles of hard hiking along the coastline until you drop down to sea level again at **Kalalau Valley.** No food, drinking water, or other supplies are available along the trail.

Note: A permit is required to hike past Hanakapiai or camp in any of the three valleys; contact the **Division of State Parks office** (on the third floor of the state building at 3060 Eiwa St., Lihue; ☎ 808/274-3444).

Waimea Canyon and **Kokee State Park** are the upcountry hiking hot spots on Kauai, and for very good reason. This is where you'll experience the natural world of Kauai—with native plants and birds that aren't found anywhere else in the world. The scenery is divine, whether you're gazing down into gorges carved through colorful rock, or watching whales frolic along the shoreline from your windy perch 1,500 feet above. The terrain is varied, too; you can walk on a boardwalk through the Alakai Swamp, or descend 1,800 feet into the arid Waimea Canyon, the so-called "Grand Canyon of the Pacific." Some 45 miles of trail in these two parks offer hikes that range in length and difficulty, so families and fitness freaks alike will find

something that suits them. The state (see contact information above) maintains a few primitive wilderness camps in Waimea Canyon, as well as a tent campground at Kokee State Park, if you want to immerse yourself in the misty and magnificent upcountry.

For hikes in **Waimea Canyon,** I'd recommend driving to the east rim (park on Halemanu Valley road, between mile markers 14 and 15 on Waimea Canyon Rd.) and taking the Canyon Trail, a round-trip of about 2 hours (it's a bit over 3 miles), which affords marvelous views of the canyon and a stop at Waipoo Falls, a magnificent 800-foot waterfall.

For hikes in **Kokee State Park,** stop first at **Kokee Natural History Museum** (at the meadow, just inside the park entrance; ☎ 808/335-9975) to pick up maps and field guides that will help you identify flora and fauna along the trails; the friendly and knowledgeable staff can also give you an update on weather conditions and help you choose a suitable trek. Volunteers often lead hikes during the summer. If you decide to trek on your own, the **Berry Flat Trail,** which begins on Mohihi Road in Kokee, is suitable for children. This 2-mile hike on level ground through a forested area takes only about 60 to 90 minutes round-trip. If you're in good shape and looking for some views, try the **Awaawapuhi Trail,** a 6.6-mile (round-trip), full-day hike with an elevation loss and gain of 1,600 feet. The trail starts on Kokee Road, about 1½ miles past the park entrance, in a wet forest that generally gets drier as you approach the ridges above Awaawapuhi and Nualolo valleys. You can look down 2,500 feet into these Na Pali Coast valleys from a number of viewpoints along the trail, which ends at a scenic perch, where you turn around and retrace your steps. If you don't mind getting wet, the **Alakai Swamp Trail** is fascinating and not as much of a slog through the bog as it used to be, thanks to the construction of a boardwalk. The trail is especially recommended for bird-watchers, as you'll see many rare species, but be sure to come prepared for rain: This area gets nearly 500 inches per year! You'll walk a little over 3½ miles by the end of the adventure.

If you're a history buff with a bit of time on your hands, you'll be pleased to learn that **Spouting Horn** (p. 58) is the starting point for the **Koloa Heritage Trail**, a 10-mile ramble that can be walked, biked, or driven. It will take you past 14 coastal and inland sites, each with an interpretive plaque. It's very informative, as well as scenic. You can pick up a map at your hotel or Koloa shops, or contact the **Poipu Beach Resort Association** (☎ 808/742-7444; www.poipu-beach.org).

If you're looking for a more centralized hike in the heart of the Coconut Coast, I'd suggest the **Nounou Ridge, or Sleeping Giant, Trail.** You can start at one of three trail heads—the easiest to find is right along Kuamoo Road (Rte. 580), about a half mile *mauka* of Opaekaa Falls. From here, you can hike on level ground for 1½ miles, or about an hour, making it suitable for kids. At the 1½-mile mark, all paths converge at a trail that gains about 500 feet in elevation in slightly less than a mile, taking you to the top of a ridge that offers great views of the island's east side. Bring mosquito repellent.

Recommended Hiking Tours

You can hike independently, but if you'd like to have a guide, **Kauai Nature Tours** (P.O. Box 549, Koloa; ☎ 808/742-8305; www.teok.com) leads a number of educational hikes in both ocean and mountain areas around the island. Rated easy to

Body & Soul

Kauai acts like a magnet to body workers, attracting practitioners trained in a diverse range of modalities, including rolfing, *lomilomi* massage, crystal healing, acupuncture, acupressure, cranio-sacral work, art therapy, hot stone massage, shiatsu, theta healing, reiki, and much more. Many practitioners work independently, and a good number will travel to you, while others are affiliated with resort spas. If you're looking for straight body work, you'll get the best deals from the independents. Spa services cost more, and the treatment selection is narrower than you'll find on the open market, but you can also enjoy such amenities as steam rooms, dry sauna, and whirlpools.

The **Kauai Wellness Center** ✯✯ (4544 Kukui St., Kapaa; ☎ 808/823-6087) is the top of the line in terms of professionalism, variety of services, cleanliness, and comfortable ambience. Rates range from $45 to $125 for 30- to 90-minute treatments. Honeymooners and wedding parties get a 15% discount. Out-call massage is available, too. It's also affiliated with the **Kauai Center for Holistic Medicine and Research** (4504 Kukui St., Kapaa; ☎ 808/823-0994; www.holisticmedicinehawaii.com), giving you access to a doctor trained in Western and Oriental medicine, as well as a naturopath and two ayurvedic physicians who oversee pancha karma treatments lasting 3 to 21 days. This ancient healing modality is offered primarily in India, and only in select places around the United States. If you're looking for a healing vacation, the Wellness Center provides a strong foundation.

strenuous, they range from a 4-hour stroll along the Mahaulepu Coastline to a difficult 9-mile forest hike. Prices run from $82 to $97 for adults and $45 to $64 for kids. Custom hiking packages can be arranged.

Another good outfit is **Aloha Kauai Tours** (1702 Haleukana St., Lihue; ☎ 800/452-1113 or 808/245-6400; www.alohakauaitours.com). You can sign up for day-long scenic tours of Kokee State Park and Kilohana Crater conducted in a four-wheel-drive vehicle ($125 adults, $90 for kids under 12) or an easy 3-mile guided hike through a rainforest in the island's interior section ($70 adults, $50 kids).

Princeville Ranch Adventures ✯ (P.O. Box 224, Hanalei; ☎ 888/955-7669 or 808/826-7668; www.adventureskauai.com; $79 for hike and $125 for zipline) offers an excellent guided hike on the North Shore's 2,500-acre private Princeville Ranch. You'll walk through pasture and forested lands to a secluded waterfall, where you can swim and have lunch. They also have some routes that include ziplines if you're feeling frisky. One of the best things about this operation is that they provide everything: day packs, water, even the perfect footwear. You just show up, walk, and enjoy.

When it comes to spas, the grand dame is **ANARA** (at the Grand Hyatt Regency Kauai Resort and Spa in Poipu; ☎ 800/633-7313 or 808/742-1234; www.kauai.hyatt.com). It's a spacious facility, with some rooms large enough for a couple to share a treatment, and an outdoor shower that allows you to rinse off surrounded by ferns and blossoms. Prices vary widely, from $55 to $130 for various massage and skin treatments that last from 30 to 70 minutes. But there's a certain hoity-toity sterility here that detracts from the charms. Although it's a bit out of the way, I much prefer the **Hart-Felt Massage and Day Spa** ★ (Waimea Plantation Cottages, Kaumualii Hwy., Waimea; ☎ 808/338-2240). It lacks the glitz of the Hyatt, but I prefer its friendly, cozy warmth. It also offers a wide range of massage and structural integration therapies, as well as relaxing spa treatments, at prices ranging from $45 to $150 for 1 to 2 hours of pampering.

If you're on the North Shore, I recommend the hot stone massage ($150 for 90 min.) at **Hanalei Day Spa** (5–7132 Kuhio Hwy., Hanalei; ☎ 808/826-6621). Another favorite establishment is **Ola's Massage** (4–971D Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/821-1100), which offers a variety of massage styles at prices ranging from $50 to $75 for a 1-hour treatment. Out-call services are also available. For something different and profound, schedule a crystal healing ($150 for a 2-hour session) with **Mi-Key** ★ (☎ 808/332-7174) at her home in Kalaheo.

Whatever treatment you choose, plan to do nothing but relax afterward. Allow the healing to settle in and do its job on a deep, cellular level. Take a nap, lounge under a coconut tree, or soak in a tide pool. Let go. Breathe.

For something really special, take the **Plantation Lifestyles Walking Tour** (☎ 808/335-2824; Tues, Thurs, and Sat at 9am; $6 adults, $5 seniors, and $3 children 12 and under) in Waimea town. It meets in the lobby of the Waimea Plantation Cottages resort, owned by the Faye family, and meanders through their mill camp, which is still occupied by former plantation workers. Although it feels a bit voyeuristic, it's absolutely fascinating, acquainting you with a lifestyle you simply couldn't fathom if you hadn't seen it yourself. The experience of plantation camp life was shared by so many families that it created an intense bond, which ultimately formed the foundation of what is known as the "local lifestyle."

HORSEBACK RIDING

If you'd rather see the countryside on horseback, you can catch a ride at one of several stables around the island. **CJM Country Stables** in Poipu (P.O. Box 1346, Koloa; stables located on a dirt cane-haul road east of the Hyatt; ☎ 808/742-6096; www.cjmstables.com) offers a good variety of excursions, some of which take you right along the coastline, although it's illegal to ride on the sand beach

in Hawaii. On the North Shore, **Princeville Ranch Stables** (corner of Pooku Rd. and Kuhio Hwy., Princeville; ☎ 808/826-6777; www.princevilleranch.com) leads group and individual rides through expansive pasturelands with sweeping mountain and ocean views. You can even join a cattle drive. Depending on their length, horseback rides cost between $65 and $125.

TENNIS

If you're seeking a more competitive pastime, you'll find 20 tennis courts at the **Princeville Resort** (5520 Ka Haku Rd., Princeville; ☎ 808/826-3620); call to reserve a court. On the South Side, your best bet is the **Kiahuna Swim & Tennis Club** (2253 Poipu Rd., Koloa; ☎ 808/742-9533). Court fees at resorts run about $10 or more for 90 minutes of play. You can use the public courts for free in Kapaa (four courts on Lehua St., at the Kapaa New Town Park) and Hanapepe (four courts on Kaumualii Hwy., at the Hanapepe Ball Park and next to the fire station). Keep in mind, though, that these courts are popular with locals; your best chance of getting an open court is midday in the middle of the week.

GOLF

Kauai's golf courses are considered some of the prettiest, and toughest, in the state. Most are located along the coast, where golfers are treated to truly gorgeous views that stretch from *mauka* to *makai*. The scenery comes at a price; golf is an expensive outing on Kauai, although hotel and condominium guests often receive special rates at whatever course is affiliated with the property. All the private courses also offer discount rates that will save you $20 to $60 on greens fees for play initiated after noon or 1pm. If you plan to do a lot of golfing, you'll save by purchasing the **Golf Challenge package,** which allows you to play the Poipu Bay, Kauai Lagoons, and Prince courses for about $390 (a $50 savings). You can sign up at any of the participating courses.

Among Kauai's private golf courses, the best rates are found at the **Kauai Lagoons Golf Club** (3351 Hoolaulea Way, Lihue; ☎ 808/241-6000). It has two courses, **Kiele** and **Mokihana,** both designed by Jack Nicklaus. They lie along a scenic stretch of coastline that's in the direct path of the trade winds and planes approaching Lihue Airport. Fees for 18 holes are $85 at Kiele (tee times 7am–2pm) and $125 at the Mokihana (tee times 7:30am–4pm).

The **Kiahuna Golf Club** (2545 Kiahuna Plantation Dr., Koloa; ☎ 808/742-9595) is one of two resort courses on the South Side, both designed by Robert Trent Jones, Jr. Kiahuna is a par-70 course built on an ancient coastal Hawaiian fishing village. Archaeological sites that could be worked into the course's design were allowed to remain, while others were razed. (I'm not a proponent of this course for that reason.) Greens fees, including cart, are $90; daily tee times are 6:30am to 5pm. Also here are a driving range, snack shop, bar, pro shop, and putting green. The same facilities are available at **Poipu Bay Resort** (2250 Ainako St., Koloa; ☎ 808/742-8711), a posh oceanfront course that's affiliated with the Grand Hyatt Regency Kauai Resort and Spa (p. 26). It's consistently rated among the nation's top courses, and hosts the annual PGA Grand Slam of Golf. Greens fees, including cart, are a whopping $185, but rates drop to $65 for play begun

after 3pm. Kids under 17 can play for half price when accompanied by a paying adult. Tee times are 6:30am to 5:30pm daily.

On the North Shore, you'll find two courses managed by Princeville Resort. The **Makai Course** (4080 Leiopapa Rd., Princeville; ☎ 808/826-3580) combines three 9-hole links to create a par-36, 27-hole course. It winds through the Princeville community, with houses built around its perimeter. The **Prince Course** (5–3900 Kuhio Hwy., Princeville; ☎ 808/826-5000) is far more wild and scenic, with dramatic views of the North Shore mountains and coastline. It's also a lot tougher than the Makai; indeed, it has a USGA course rating of 75.3, making it the most challenging in Hawaii. Greens fees, including cart, are $125 at the Makai and $175 at the Prince. During the winter and spring, Laysan albatross frequently nest on both Princeville courses, allowing you to witness the attentive parenting skills of these big seabirds.

Because locals usually can't afford the high fees charged by private courses, they flock to the county-owned **Wailua Municipal Golf Course** (3–5351 Kuhio Hwy., Lihue; ☎ 808/241-6666), which lies between the highway and the ocean, just south of the Wailua River. It's a pretty little course, but the low prices are the real draw. Greens fees—cash only—are just $32 on weekdays and $44 on weekends. Optional carts are $20. Tee times are 6:30am to 5pm daily. Even lower fees are charged at Kauai's other public facility: **Kukuiolono Golf Course** (Papalina Rd., Kalaheo; ☎ 808/332-9151). It costs just $8 to play this par-36, 9-hole course, so it's generally very crowded, but you'll witness lovely views of the hilly Kalaheo countryside. Tee times are 6:30am to 4:50pm daily.

BICYCLING

Island roads tend to be narrow, busy, and devoid of bicycle lanes, so those who bicycle on Kauai highways do so at their own risk. But there is a dandy little bike-pedestrian path that runs along the coast, behind the Coconut Marketplace, that's level and safe enough for young children. You'll also find many good mountain-biking trails in Waimea and Kokee state parks. The state forest reserve at the end of Kuamoo Road in Kapaa, *mauka* of Keahua Arboretum, has a number of dirt roads good for riding, especially the 13-mile **Powerline Trail,** which takes you over the mountains to the edge of Hanalei Valley.

You can rent bikes at **Kauai Cycle and Tour** (1379 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/821-2115; $15–$35 a day). To rent beach cruisers and mountain bikes, try **Outfitters Kauai** (2827 Poipu Rd., Koloa; ☎ 888/742-9887; www.outfitterskauai.com; $20–$40 a day). A kid's mountain bike costs $20 a day; a child's seat for your own bike is $5. Outfitters Kauai also offers early-morning and late-afternoon 4½-hour excursions that include a 12-mile downhill ride from Waimea Canyon at 3,600 feet to the coast. The cost is $90 for adults and $70 for children ages 12 to 14. Younger children are not allowed.

KAYAKING

Kauai is the only Hawaiian island to excel in river kayaking (as opposed to ocean kayaking). One- and two-man kayaks ply the broad, deep waters of the **Wailua River,** alongside motorized tour boats that hold the permit to land at a lush little cave known as the **Fern Grotto.** You can rent kayaks for between $15 and $90 a

Kayak-Rental Outfits

Kayak rentals should always include: life jackets, paddles, dry bags, and, when necessary, roof racks for your car. Among the kayak renters on the island, the following outfitters offer the best value:

- **Kayak Kauai** (☎ 800/437-3507 or 808/826-9844; www.kayakkauai.com): This is the only kayaking company with its own dock on the Hanalei River. Along with its shop in Hanalei (on the Kuhio Highway in Hanalei Town), it also has a store in Kapaa. Single kayaks start at $28 a day; doubles go from $52.
- **Outfitters Kauai** (Poipu Plaza, 2827A Poipu Rd.; ☎ 808/742-9667; www.outfitterskauai.com): Cost is $40 per person per day, and along with the gear, they'll give you a brief lesson when you're set into the water. Outfitters also has two locations riverside, where they distribute the kayaks, on the Wailua and Huleia rivers. Like Kayak Kauai, it also offers guided tours.
- **Pedal 'n Paddle** (in the Ching Young Village shopping center, Hanalei; ☎ 808/826-9069; http://pedalnpaddle.com): This is the cheapest of the three at just $15 to $20 for a single kayak and $35 for a double, but you can only rent kayaks for paddles along the Hanalei River.

day, depending on size, and paddle them on the Wailua, Hanalei (North Shore), and Huleia (Lihue) rivers. Guided tours also are available; they're good for beginning paddlers and some include lunch. **Kayak Kauai** (P.O. Box 508, Hanalei; ☎ 800/437-3507 or 808/826-9844; www.kayakkauai.com) spearheaded the industry on the Garden Island and remains the best. If you're a skilled kayaker, you'll have fun exploring the little coves and crannies of Kauai's coastline when the seas are calm. Na Pali Coast is a popular summertime paddle; you depart from Hanalei and take advantage of the winds and currents to help push you toward Polihale, where a shuttle van picks you up if you booked through a commercial guide.

WHALE-WATCHING & OTHER CRUISES

Given the beauty of the coastline, it's not surprising that Kauai has a sizable commercial-tour-boat industry. You can travel on a range of motorized boats and catamarans, although it's wise to avoid the rubber Zodiac-type boats if you're pregnant, frail, or under the age of 8 as the ride can be very rough, even punishing, if the winds come up. Although a few commercial boating operations depart from Hanalei, nearly all the tour boats leave from Port Allen Harbor on the West Side. In summer the route is invariably the western approach to Na Pali Coast, and most tours follow a 4- to 6-hour itinerary that includes anchoring off Nualolo for a thrilling deep-water snorkel stop. When big wintertime surf makes Na Pali

Coast unsafe, the tour boats offer whale-watching cruises along the South Side coastline instead. Endangered humpback whales frequent waters all around Kauai between November and March, when they give birth and tend their young. You often can see them spouting, skyhopping, and breaching from shore, but a boat trip increases the likelihood of a sighting and definitely brings you closer to the action.

Overall, I've found **Captain Andy's Sailing Adventure** ★ kids (Port Allen Small Boat Harbor, Eleele; ☎ 808/335-6833; www.sailing-hawaii.com) provides the most consistently excellent service and value—you can save 10% booking online. The 55-foot catamaran is comfortable enough for kids and seniors, and this is one of the few outfits that will take very young children. Plus, you can rest easy knowing it's a longtime company with a good safety record. Their 5-hour Na Pali snorkel cruise costs $139 for adults, $99 for children ages 2 to 12.

Another good choice is **Liko Kauai Cruises** ★ (9875 Waimea Rd., Waimea; ☎ 800/732-5456 or 808/338-0333; www.liko-kauai.com), a 49-foot power catamaran owned and operated by Liko Hookano, a local boy from the West Side. A 4-hour Na Pali snorkel cruise is $110 for adults and $75 for kids. **Captain Sundown** ★ (Hanalei; ☎ 808/826-5585; www.captainsundown.com), one of just three operators based at Hanalei Bay, also offers reliable trips. You can take a 6-hour Na Pali snorkel sail ($148 for adults, $75 for kids 7–12) during the summer; and a 3-hour whale-watching sail in the winter.

FISHING CRUISES

Charter fishing boats also use Port Allen, as well as Nawiliwili Small Boat Harbor in Lihue. Deep-sea fishing isn't a budget activity, but it's definitely a sportsman's delight. And if you're traveling with a group, you can book an exclusive charter for about the same rate you'd pay traveling as a solo fisherman. In general, expect to pay $99 to $125 for a half-day shared fishing trip; the price goes up to $675 to $725 for six people on an exclusive 4-hour charter; all fishing gear is provided. Most boats are going after mahimahi, ahi, and aku, while marlin is typically catch-and-release. If you want to keep some of your catch, be sure to make arrangements with the captain before you go; typically the boat keeps it all. Some of the better operations are **True Blue Charters** (☎ 808/246-6333; www.trueblue charters.com) and **Kai Bear Sportfishing Charters** (☎ 808/652-4556; www.kai bear.com). **Hana Paa Charters** (☎ 808/823-6031; fishkauai.com) has very competitive prices. On the North Shore, **Anini Fishing Charters** (☎ 808/828-1285; www.kauaifishing.com) is a homey little operation that gets my vote.

DIVING & SNORKELING

If you'd rather view fish than catch them, you can do that, too. Both shore and boat dives are available, primarily on the South Side, and on the North Shore during the summer months. A few travel to the waters around Niihau, an all-day trip that runs $235 to $270 per passenger. Prices vary depending on the length of the trip, number of dives, and comforts offered aboard the boat, but certified divers can expect to pay between $60 and $100 for a one-tank dive and $80 to $135 for two-tank dives. Refresher and certification courses are offered, too. Some packages include gear, or you can rent the works for about $25 to $30 per day.

My favorite operator is **Mana Divers** (4310 Waialo Rd., Eleele; ☎ 808/335-0881; www.manadivers.com), a low-key operation with fair prices that knows great dive spots. Nondivers can usually travel on the dive boat and snorkel or sightsee for about $60. Or you can combine snorkeling with sightseeing on a Na Pali boat cruise.

If you want to snorkel on your own, most dive shops rent snorkel gear for less than $10 a day. They also sell plastic cards with some of the more common reef fish named and pictured so you can identify what you're seeing underwater. **Snorkel Bob's** (4–734 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa, ☎ 808/823-9433; and 3236 Poipu Rd., Koloa, ☎ 808/742-2206) allows you to rent gear on one island and return it on another at no additional charge. Some good snorkel spots are Poipu Beach on the South Side and Kee Beach at the end of the road on the North Shore during summer months only. Lydgate Park on the East Side has a sheltered ocean pool where beginners can practice. But be cautious when you're snorkeling anywhere. Reefs can have dangerous currents even when the water appears calm.

SURFING, WINDSURFING & WATER-SKIING

Kauai's **surfing** is legendary, and so far, the best breaks still aren't totally jammed with crowds. Locals want to make sure it stays that way, and it's important to understand that you likely won't see too many friendly faces as you paddle out. Be respectful, and don't expect anyone to cut you any slack. If you're not a skilled surfer, stay away from the more challenging breaks, where you're more apt to be considered a nuisance. Stop in at one of the surf shops in Koloa, Kapaa, or Hanalei to inquire about surf breaks and conditions; you can also rent surf and boogie boards for $5 an hour or $15 to $20 per day.

If you want to learn, you'll find several small schools ready to teach you. Prices range from $60 for a group lesson to $100 for 2 hours of private instruction. At **Titus Kinimaka's Surf School** (☎ 800/662-7055), you'll be taught by the big-wave surfer himself at Hanalei Bay. When you call, you'll be told where to meet.

On the South Side, **Margo Oberg Surfing School** (Poipu Beach; ☎ 808/332-6100 or 808/639-0708; www.surfonkauai.com) is another good place to learn. Oberg, a seven-time world surfing champ, and her staff will work with you on everything from the fundamentals of selecting a board to standing up on a wave.

Depending on the conditions, you may see **windsurfing** and **kiteboarding** at Shipwreck Beach on the South Side, Kapaa Beach Park on the East Side, and Anini Beach on the North Shore. If you want to try it yourself, **Windsurf Kauai** (Kilauea; ☎ 808/828-6338) is the only game in town. When you call, you'll be told where to meet. It'll cost you $75 for a 3-hour lesson, with equipment, at Anini Beach, or you can rent gear for $25 an hour or $75 per day.

If you still haven't had your fill of watersports, you can go **water-skiing** on the Wailua River with **Kauai Water Ski & Surf Co.** (Kinipopo Shopping Village, Wailua; ☎ 800/344-7915 or 808/822-3574), which offers half-hour ($55) and hour-long ($110) outings on weekdays only.

HELICOPTER FLIGHTS

I understand the appeal of helicopter flights. Besides the thrill of the ride itself, there's the jaw-dropping scenery that can't be seen any other way. And I know that

many companies have made an effort to comply with voluntary "fly neighborly" plans governing altitude minimums and no-fly zones.

But still, tour helicopters rankle. Their noise is so intrusive, whether you're at home or outdoors, that it greatly mars the wilderness experience on Kauai. Indeed, helicopter noise is the top complaint among hikers, whether they're trekking in tropical valleys or atop mountain ridges. And no one knows how birds, bats, and insects are affected by the clattering racket of low-flying helicopters. There's also the issue of cost. Helicopter flights are definitely the most expensive activity on Kauai; 1-hour flights cost $185 and up.

If you're determined to take a helicopter flight, don't book it until you arrive on-island so you can check out the weather conditions. If it's cloudy in the mountains, you won't see much, and the flights go out even when viewing is less than ideal. You can often get discounts through activity booths, and if you call late in the afternoon to book a sunset flight, you may score a reduced-price seat to fill up the flight.

More than a dozen helicopter companies operate on Kauai, which is the statewide hub of the industry. Most of the flights depart from the heliport on Ahukini Road, adjacent to the Lihue Airport. One firm flies out of the Princeville Airport on the North Shore. I advise booking with longtime companies that have years of experience dealing with the tricky winds, fogs, squalls, and mountainous terrain that make flying on Kauai so dangerous. My top picks are **Jack Harter Helicopters** (☎ 888/245-2001 or 808/245-3774; www.helicopters-kauai.com) and **Will Squyres Air Kauai** (☎ 808/245-8881; www.helicopters-hawaii.com).

ATTENTION, SHOPPERS!

Kauai has never been known as a shopping mecca, nor has it aspired to be one. That characteristic alone has prompted some prospective tourists to revise their travel plans, although it seems to me there's plenty of shopping to satisfy most visitors. Best of all, many of the stores are delightful, one-of-a-kind boutiques, reflecting the talents and interests of the proprietor.

LIHUE

In spite of that introduction, Kauai does have some big box stores and malls. Fortunately, they're still largely confined to Lihue. The largest and only true regional mall is **Kukui Grove Shopping Center** (3–2600 Kaumualii Hwy., Lihue; ☎ 808/245-7784), where you'll find many of the same fast-food eateries and shops common to Anytown, USA, as well as a fourplex movie cinema and grocery store. Anchor stores include Sears, Longs Drugs, and Macy's, which carries quality aloha wear for women and men. An especially nice feature of this mall is the Kukui Grove Exhibition Space devoted to works by local artists. The juried shows change fairly often and admission to the gallery is free.

Clustered around Kukui Grove are **Home Depot** and **Big Kmart,** both of which are across a large parking lot from **Border's Books, Music & Café**—one of Kauai's most popular stores and hangouts. They have a sizable collection of Hawaiian music and books on various Hawaiiana topics.

Another shopping hot spot among locals is **Hilo Hatties** (3–3252 Kuhio Hwy., Lihue; ☎ 808/245-3404), where the entire store is devoted to lower- and mid-priced aloha wear, including the matching shirt and dress sets that are favored by

some couples. You can often find coupons and deals in one of the many free tourism magazines available on-island.

Although these stores provide some of the necessities of life, the only shop worth seeking out in Lihue is the **Kauai Museum Gift Shop** ★ (4428 Rice St.; ☎ 808/246-2470). It's small, but it's an excellent place to find quality goods that are fairly priced, including many handmade and authentic Hawaiian craft items. They carry hand-sewn feather lei hatbands and Niihau shell jewelry, as well as hand-woven lauhala hats, Hawaiiana books, and other distinctive merchandise.

KAPAIA

From Lihue, follow Kuhio Highway for about 2 miles before it dips down to the tiny hamlet of Kapaia, where you can catch the turnoff to Wailua Falls, or stop at **The Kapaia Stichery** ★ (3–3551 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ 808/245-2281). Located in a restored plantation building with high ceilings, this stand-alone store carries beautiful tropical print fabrics and Hawaiian quilting supplies, as well as top-quality men's aloha shirts and finished Hawaiian quilts, some of them hand-stitched and others machine-sewn.

THE EAST SIDE: WAILUA

In Wailua, you'll find **Bambulei** (Kuhio Hwy. at the intersection with Halelio Rd., Wailua Village; ☎ 808/823-8641), another distinctive store that makes good use of an old plantation-era building to showcase its distressed-wood furniture, women's clothes, and an eclectic assortment of home accessories. It's fun, funky, hip, and pricey, but worth a look. Due to its location on Kuhio Highway, just north of the congested intersection with Halelio Road, it's easiest to slip in and out of here when you're southbound on the highway.

The **Coconut Marketplace** (4–484 Kuhio Hwy. Kapaa; ☎ 808/822-3641) lies kitty-corner to Bambulei, but its mall-style architecture and pedestrian merchandise are so different, it might as well be on another planet. With a number of restaurants and more than three dozen shops, it's the second-largest mall on the island and a magnet for visitors staying in the many Coconut Coast resorts within walking distance.

KAPAA

If you're a die-hard shopper, you'll likely enjoy strolling through the Marketplace, but you'd be better off spending your time and money in north Kapaa, a town that originally served pineapple- and sugar-plantation workers. Small eateries, galleries, and interesting clothing, crafts, and jewelry shops can be found along the half-mile stretch of Kuhio Highway that lies roughly between Ono Family Restaurant and Kojima's Market. Given the steady, slow-moving flow of traffic along the highway, it's easiest to park your car and walk to the different businesses. If you want to cross the highway, use a crosswalk and be assertive—cars won't stop unless you're out there on the road.

My favorite downtown Kapaa store is **Davison's Arts** ★★ (4–1322 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/821-8022; www.davisonarts.com), run by John and Hayley Davison. John's a fine artist with a whimsical, bold style, and Hayley handcrafts furniture and other small pieces from native and local wood. Their work is beautifully displayed in an upbeat, campy gallery that adjoins **Kawamoto's,** an appliance

store that goes back many years. They also sell sumptuous hand-woven rugs and the eclectic, original creations of select local artists. Down the block is **Kela's Glass Gallery** (4–1354 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/822-4527), where the merchandise is exquisite and expensive. If you like glassware, you'll surely find something to tempt you here, and they're masters at shipping their fragile, handmade treasures. Since you're in the neighborhood, stop by **Lightwave Pottery** (961 Kipuni Way, Kapaa; ☎ 808/826-9576; www.lightwavepottery.com), where you can watch potter Dean McRaine work on his functional creations each weekday afternoon between about 1 and 6pm. Take Kipuni Way, the first *mauka* road south of Kapaa Shopping Center, and follow it just past the Kauai Community Federal Credit Union. The studio is on your right; check out the wetlands behind it, where you can often spot endangered Hawaiian water birds.

If you have more practical concerns, you'll find a local Big Save grocery store, post office, self-serve laundry, hardware store, gas station, and a couple of eateries in the **Kapaa Shopping Center** (4–1105 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ 808/246-0634). **Hawaiian Blizzard,** the sidewalk shave-ice stand there, is one of Kauai's best. **Business Support Services** (4–1191 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/822-5504) is the place to go when you need to send faxes, ship packages, check e-mail, or download photos from your digital camera. It's just north of a tiny side street that leads to **Cost-U-Less** (4525 Akia Rd., Kapaa; ☎ 808/823-6803), where you'll save money on groceries, especially if you're shopping for a group.

The last hurrah for shopping in Kapaa is **Otsuka's Furniture & Appliances** (4–1624 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ 808/822-7766), an oceanfront home-furnishings store that caters to visitors with some 20,000 small household items that can be tucked into a suitcase or shipped to your home for free.

THE NORTH SHORE: KILAUEA

For such a tiny town, Kilauea has a surprising number of good stores, perhaps to account for its lack of good restaurants. In any case, they're easy to find, since they're by and large at the **Kong Lung Center** (2484 Keneke St., Kilauea). The most notable is **Kong Lung Co.** (☎ 808/828-1822), a lovely but very expensive emporium set in a historic stone building. It has a selection of quality women's clothing, fine jewelry, and upscale housewares, all of it artistically displayed and absolutely nonessential. More pretty and frivolous merchandise is offered at the **Lotus Gallery of Fine Art** ✰ (☎ 808/828-9898). It's owned by a husband-wife team, with the wife designing fine jewelry that's sold alongside crystals and other special treasures in this lovely Asian-influenced gallery. They also have a small outlet in the foyer of the Beach House Restaurant (5022 Lawai Rd., Koloa; ☎ 808/742-8649), which focuses on jewelry. **Island Soap & Candle Works** (☎ 808/828-1955) is another worthwhile shop in this small center. You can watch tropical-scented soaps being made and purchase candles and various beauty products.

Across the way, in another small cluster of historic stone buildings, is **Healthy Hut Natural Foods Store** ✰✰ (4270 Kilauea Lighthouse Rd.; ☎ 808/828-6626; open daily), the cheapest place to buy health foods on Kauai. Although small, it has a good selection. You can also pick up natural foods, alternative and conventional health and beauty products, and a few unique gift items at **North Shore**

Pharmacy ✯ (2460 Oka St.; ☎ 808/828/1844), which has a very knowledgeable and helpful staff.

If you continue on Kilauea Lighthouse Road, you'll end up at Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge, which would be worth a visit even if the **Kilauea Point Natural History Association Bookstore** ✯✯ (☎ 808/828-0168) weren't so well stocked with natural-history titles, children's coloring books and games, locally made crafts, and various items with a nature theme. All the proceeds benefit the nonprofit association's education and interpretive efforts.

HANALEI

Once you go downhill into Hanalei Valley, you'll find most of the shopping is bunched up in Hanalei's tiny downtown. One exception is **Ola's Hanalei** (☎ 808/826-6937), on Kuhio Highway next to the Hanalei Dolphin restaurant, on the outskirts of town. It has some lovely housewares, art pieces, campy cards, and quality crafts that tend to be pricey. Less expensive and equally interesting is **On the Road to Hanalei** ✯ (☎ 808/826-7360), a collection of housewares, clothing, jewelry, and children's games, along with other assorted goodies imported from Indonesia. It's technically part of the **Ching Young Shopping Village**, which fronts Kuhio Highway smack in the middle of Hanalei and has a number of interesting shops. One of my favorites is **Hanalei Video & Music** ✯ (Ching Young Village on Kuhio Hwy., Hanalei; ☎ 808/826-9633), where you can rent videos and buy handmade ukulele, guitars, Hawaiian sheet music, and island-style-music CDs. The **Evolve Love Gallery** (Ching Young Village on Kuhio Hwy., Hanalei; ☎ 808/826-4755) features the work of local artists; and it's worth checking out if you're looking for shell jewelry and unique local crafts. **Village Variety** (Ching Young Village on Kuhio Hwy., Hanalei; ☎ 808/826-6077) has some of the best bargains in Hanalei and an eclectic assortment of merchandise, ranging from film and sunscreen to kitchenware and fishing gear.

THE SOUTH SIDE: KOLOA

In Koloa town itself, about the only place worth stopping is the locally owned surf shop **Progressive Expressions** (5420 Koloa Rd.; ☎ 808/742-6041). It's been a landmark for more than 30 years, selling custom surfboards, boogie boards, beach gear, and surf clothing. You'll also find a branch of **Island Soap & Candle Works** (5428 Koloa Rd.; ☎ 808/742-1945).

POIPU

Closer to the resorts is **Poipu Shopping Village** (2360 Kiahuna Plantation Rd., Koloa; ☎ 808/742-2831), which has a decent selection of shops and restaurants. The merchandise is skewed toward the youthful surf set, although there are several upscale jewelry stores and art galleries here, too. **Hale Mana Fine Art** ✯ (2360 Kiahuna Plantation Dr., Poipu; ☎ 808/742-1027) has unusual and South Pacific–themed products. It's one of my favorite stores on the South Side. The other is **Kebanu Gallery** ✯ (3440 Poipu Rd., Koloa; ☎ 808/742-2727), which offers a distinctive selection of jewelry, home accessories, and gift items that are handmade and interesting. Both of these shops carry merchandise you won't find elsewhere in Hawaii, although only a few of the items are locally made.

Along Lawai Road, on the western edge of Poipu, lies the **National Tropical Botanical Garden Gift Shop** (Lawai Rd., Poipu; ☎ 808/742-2430), which is stocked with quality botanical-themed merchandise, including books, small art pieces, cards, and housewares. It's right across the street from the **Spouting Horn** attraction, where a number of vendors have county licenses to hawk their wares. I've never found anything I wanted, but if you're there anyway, you might as well cruise through the booths.

THE WEST SIDE

You'll find a better selection of locally made products at the **West Kauai Craft Fair,** although you'll have to drive all the way to Waimea to check it out. Vendors—most of them Kauai crafters—set up tables Friday through Sunday in a field on the *makai* side of Kaumualii Highway, across from the West Kauai Technology and Visitor Center. It's a good place to look for Niihau shell jewelry. When you visit Kokee State Park, be certain to stop in at the **Kokee Natural History Museum** ✦ (☎ 808/335-9975), a combination gift shop and interpretive center for the park. It has a great selection of books, items handcrafted from native woods and other natural materials, and some special gifts aimed toward nature lovers. You can feel virtuous knowing your purchases benefit the nonprofit organization **Hui O Laka** (☎ 808/335-9975; www.kokee.org), which runs the museum and a number of other programs in Kokee.

Finally, when it's time to leave Kauai, consider picking up some very low-priced fresh flower leis and cut tropical flowers at **Greeters of Hawaii** (Lihue Airport terminal; ☎ 808/245-1679). They're packed in hard-sided containers that make it easy to bring home a special gift or fragrant memento for yourself.

NIGHTLIFE ON KAUAI

Nightlife on Kauai has always been something of a joke, mainly because for so long there wasn't any. Remember, this is a rural island with small, isolated communities, where folks go to bed early and locals are more apt to drink at the beach park, or a friend's carport, than go out.

Still, you can hear live music, dance, knock back a few beers at a sports bar, play pool, throw darts, and occasionally enjoy the performing arts if you feel the need for some postsundown diversion. Your opportunities to engage in these activities are greatest in **Kapaa** and **Lihue,** but you'll find a bit of action in every big resort and small town. In the last 5 years, I've noticed a significant increase in the number of restaurants, lounges, and bars featuring local musicians. You'll most frequently encounter Hawaiian music, but you can also hear Kauai bands performing jazz, rock, and reggae, and virtuoso artists playing guitar, piano, harp, and flute.

Travelers under the age of 21 are apt to find Kauai total dullsville, because there's virtually nothing for teens to do at night, except go to the movies; multiplex cinemas are located at the **Coconut Marketplace** (☎ 808/821-2324) in Kapaa and at the **Kukui Grove Shopping Center** (☎ 808/245-5055) in Lihue.

THE EAST SIDE

In Lihue, **Rob's Good Time Grill** (Rice Shopping Center, Rice St., Lihue; ☎ 808/246-0311; www.robsgoodtimegrill.net) is a slightly gritty but friendly place that

attracts a low-key, unpretentious crowd. It's a rectangular-shaped, rather nondescript establishment in a shopping center where you can eat, drink, sing karaoke, and dance nightly to a DJ mix, and the prices are fairly reasonable. Down by Nawiliwili Harbor, at the Kauai Marriott Resort & Beach Club, is **Duke's Canoe Club Barefoot Bar** (3610 Rice St., Lihue; ☎ 808/246-9599). It's a pleasant, casual spot for a drink and snack, with a great outdoor setting on Kalapaki Bay. It can get noisy because it's usually busy, and the tables are set close together.

In Kapaa, my favorite places to hear live music are the **Blossoming Lotus Restaurant** (4504 Kukui St., Kapaa; ☎ 808/822-7678; www.blossominglotus.com), which has eclectic entertainment nightly in the dining room, and **Caffe Coco** (4–369 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ 808/822/7990), where it's fun to order a yummy dessert and/or espresso-bar drink and listen to acoustic music. They have a noteworthy belly-dance show on Wednesday nights.

In the Coconut Marketplace, the **Hukilau Lanai** (520 Aleka Loop, Kapaa; ☎ 808/822-0600) usually has a Hawaiian trio in the open lounge off the dining room, and there's live Hawaiian entertainment nightly at **Kauai Hula Girl** (4–484 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/822-4422). If you feel like dancing, pop in to the **Tradewinds** (4–484 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/822-1621), which has either a DJ or live music every night, as well as karaoke, video games, and live satellite sports. The Tradewinds, with its South Seas decor and younger crowd, is certainly the liveliest of the three establishments, all of which cater primarily to visitors.

Despite its location next to McDonald's, **Lizard Lounge** (Waipouli Town Center, Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/821-2205) is a bar best suited for adults, with a musty smell and scruffy flooring, as well as TVs, dartboards, and a small crowd of friendly, gregarious regulars. The food's not too bad. Unfortunately, the same can't be said of **The Shack** (4–1639 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa; ☎ 808/823-0200), which bills itself as a "family-oriented" sports bar and burger joint. It does a brisk business, so I guess the appeal of video games, big-screen TVs, and downing a few pitchers outweighs the barely average but cheap cuisine. One of the last buildings at the north end of Kapaa, The Shack sometimes has live music and dancing on weekend nights. Both places stay open until 2am, as does the Tradewinds bar, unless the clientele heads home early.

THE NORTH SHORE

Heading north, **The Landing Pad** (5–3541 Kuhio Hwy., Princeville; ☎ 808/826-9561) is a tiny bar at the Princeville Airport where live music, including reggae on Wednesday nights, is interspersed with DJ mixes. It's a low-key, inexpensive place to have a drink and dance without getting into any trouble.

Within Princeville proper, you have two choices: **The Living Room at the Princeville Resort** (5520 Ka Haku Rd.; ☎ 808/826-9644) and **Happy Talk Lounge, at Hanalei Bay Resort** (5380 Honoike Rd.; ☎ 808/826-6522). Both are great spots to have a drink and pupu (appetizer) while watching the sunset; however, your tab will be smaller at the Happy Talk, where you'll be listening to live soft jazz and island-style music in a casual, cozy setting. The Living Room is quite elegant, but very expensive, and despite its comfy sofas and armchairs, it's a bit full of itself. Still, the pianists and vocalists who perform are invariably excellent.

In Hanalei, **Tahiti Nui** (5–5134 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ 808/826-6277) and **Hanalei Gourmet** (5–5161 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ 808/826-2524; www.hanaleigourmet.com) tend

to attract a mix of hard-drinking locals and visitors looking for action. Both places serve food and have live music—nightly at Hanalei Gourmet and on weekends at the Nui, which also has karaoke on Monday nights. The Nui is a funky Polynesian-style place with a long bar and a nice porch; Hanalei Gourmet is darker, smaller, and quieter. They're both right on the main drag, Kuhio Highway, nearly opposite one another.

In Poipu, **Stevenson's Library in the Grand Hyatt Regency Kauai Resort and Spa** (1571 Poipu Rd., Koloa; ☎ 808/742-1234) is the posh place to smoke a cigar and drink an expensive cognac; it's very somber, masculine, and quiet, as you might expect from the name. **Keoki's Paradise** (2360 Kiahuna Plantation Dr., Koloa; ☎ 808/742-7534), which often has live music on weekend nights, is definitely more of a cruising scene, with a mix of visitors and locals.

Waimea Brewing Company (9400 Kaumualii Hwy., Waimea; ☎ 808/338-9733; www.waimeabrewing.com) is a relaxing place to sit outside, enjoy the mountain and ocean views, and try some of this microbrewery's 12 beers—eight of them served on tap. They have other beers and tropical drinks, too, and you can order pupus, or a light dinner from the pub menu. On Thursday nights there's good Hawaiian music.

PERFORMING ARTS ON KAUAI

Despite its small resident population, Kauai has a large number of folks with artistic, theatrical, and musical talent. Throughout the year, they stage musical and dramatic productions, art openings, and concerts. To learn more about what's scheduled while you're on the island, check in with the **Kauai Community Players** (☎ 808/246-8985), the **Kauai Society of Artists** (www.hawaiilink.net/~ksa), the **Kauai Association of Performing Arts** (☎ 808/742-1338), and the **Garden Island Arts Council** (www.gardenislandarts.org).

The **Kauai Concert Association** (☎ 808/245-7464) hosts off-island musicians and dance companies touring the state; the season usually runs from the fall through the spring. Their concerts are nearly always scheduled at the Kauai Community College Center for Performing Arts, off Kaumualii Highway, just west of Kukui Grove.

LUAUS ON KAUAI

Although I've never been a big fan of commercial luaus because they bear so little resemblance to the real thing, they're fine if viewed solely as entertainment and not as authentic Hawaiian culture. Most luaus have several things in common: a huge spread of food, Polynesian dancing and music, and plenty of strong mai tais. You can expect to dine and watch the show as part of a large group of tourists.

Prices vary widely, depending on the locale, but you can sometimes find bargains at an activity center, and the giveaway tourist magazines often carry coupons. In any case, reservations are required.

Of all the luaus offered around the island, my favorite is held in the lush gardens of **Smith's Tropical Paradise** ★ (☎ 808/821-6895 or 808/821-6896; www.smithskauai.com/luau.html; Mon, Wed, and Fri nights), which lies on the southern bank of Wailua River. You can watch them remove the pig from the *imu* (underground oven). The exciting floor show is held in a theater lit by tiki torches. This was one of the first commercial luaus on the island, and it hasn't lost its

charm. Another good choice is the show at the Coconut Marketplace hotel, now known as **Marriott's Courtyard Kauai Waipouli Beach** (4–484 Kuhio Hwy.; ☎ 808/822-3455; http://marriott.com; Mon–Sat nights). It has traditional luau food, good Hawaiian music, and a torch-lighting ceremony.

ABCs of Kauai

Area Code All the Hawaiian islands are in the 808 area code.

ATMs/Currency Exchange Your best bet is to change money at the Honolulu Airport before you fly to Kauai, or use traveler's checks. ATMs are widely available and open around the clock at most banks and in many stores.

Business Hours Banks are typically open Monday to Friday from 9am to 4:30pm. Government offices are open weekdays from 8am to 5pm. Most stores are open daily from 9 or 10am to 6pm; some stay open until 9pm.

Car Rentals You'll find car-rental agencies at Lihue Airport. See p. 14.

Emergencies For police, fire department, or ambulance, dial ☎ **911.**

Information The **Kauai Visitors Bureau** (4334 Rice St., Lihue; ☎ 808/245-3971) is open from 9am to 5pm weekdays.

Medical **Wilcox Memorial Hospital** (3420 Kuhio Hwy., Lihue; ☎ 808/245-1100) has a 24-hour emergency room, as well as a walk-in clinic (☎ 808/245-1500) Monday through Saturday if you need to see a doctor.

Newspapers The *Garden Island* (50¢; $1.25 on Sun) is published each morning on Kauai and it's widely available in stores and newspaper boxes around the island. Honolulu and mainland newspapers can be purchased at convenience stores and supermarkets.

Pharmacies **Wilcox Memorial Hospital** has a pharmacy, and you can also have prescriptions filled at **North Shore Pharmacy** (2460 Oka St., Kilauea; ☎ 808/828-1844) and **Longs Drugs** (4–831 Kuhio Hwy., Lihue; ☎ 808/822-4918; or Kukui Grove Shopping Center, Lihue; ☎ 808/245-8871).

Police In an emergency, call ☎ **911,** or in nonurgent situations, dial ☎ 808/2411-6711.

Post Office You'll find post offices in Hanalei, Princeville, Kilauea, Anahola, Kapaa, Lihue, Koloa, Lawai, Hanapepe, Eleele, and Waimea. They each keep different hours, but all are open Monday through Saturday.

Safety Kauai has very little violent crime, so leave your fears at home. But do keep an eye on your possessions, and leave nothing in your rental car.

Transit Info For information regarding the **Kauai Bus,** call ☎ 808/241-6410.

3 Oahu: The Main Draw

Though it can be crowded and urban, Oahu's undeniable attractions are hard to resist.

by Lesa Griffith

"OAHU IS SO OVER; KAUAI IS THE PLACE TO GO," SAY CALIFORNIA HIPSTERS.

Well, if you're looking to escape the urban sprawl, they're right. Oahu—aptly known as the Gathering Place—is home to almost a million people. Plus, just less than another half million visit each month. Traffic is a nightmare—and not just in Honolulu. On winter weekends, cars are lined up bumper to bumper "out country," better known as the North Shore, with residents and tourists alike hoping to see big waves.

But Oahu is the most developed of the Hawaiian islands because it has the best of the things that make Hawaii famous—the most accessible, sandy-bottomed beaches; the most consistent, surfer-friendly waves; and easy-to-get-to hikes. Of course, as the home of Pearl Harbor, Oahu also has an irrefutable place in world history and Americans' hearts. As far as Hawaiian history goes, Oahu was the headquarters for the islands' first unifying king—Kamehameha I—and it has remained Hawaii's capital ever since. The major cultural sites reflecting Hawaii's monarchy are all here—Iolani Palace, the Royal Mausoleum, and Queen Emma's Summer Palace.

It's also an exciting time to be on Oahu. Just a decade ago, Honolulu, the island's nerve center, was a provincial town suffering from a severe case of brain drain, with talented locals going off to college on the mainland and not coming back because there were no job opportunities on the island. In the last few years, those people have become disenchanted with places like New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, and they've been lured back by their island home. For all its urban development, Oahu still has an island rhythm and its own culture that's evolved from its diversity. New residents from all over the world are choosing to settle here, too.

The result is a bustling island where there's always something to do. Oahu is home to the Hawaii International Film Festival, the Hawaii International Jazz Festival, and the Honolulu Marathon.

Oahu is also more "Hawaiian" than it has been since an 1896 law closed Hawaiian-language schools and mandated that English be the language of instruction in public schools. A cultural renaissance that began in the 1970s is seeing a ripening. There are more hula *halau* (troupes) than ever, Hawaiian music is thriving

(last year, Israel Kamakawiwo'ole's album *Iz* became the first Hawaiian album to go platinum), and the art of growing taro is practiced all over the island.

In addition to celebrating its traditions, Honolulu has a famous melting-pot culture—one created from the tastes and traditions of the islands' Japanese, Chinese, Samoan, Korean, and Filipino residents—which adds a cosmopolitan vibe. You'll find a bustling Chinatown next door to a skyscraper-filled business district. There's a kava bar on one corner and just a few doors down a chic, sleek restaurant and bar owned by a Japanese impresario, where people dish over cocktails to the sounds of electronic music. These odd neighbors capture modern Oahu in a nutshell: simultaneously, it digs into its traditional roots and keeps up with the rest of the world.

DON'T LEAVE OAHU WITHOUT . . .

Swimming in Waimea Bay (or, if it's winter, watching the big waves from the safety of shore). In summer, this wide bowl of water is the ultimate aquamarine salt-water swimming pool. See p. 137.

Swanning around an heiress's estate. Shangri La, the oceanfront home of the late Doris Duke (her father founded Duke University) is a sumptuous spread that defines island chic. It's also an Ali Baba den of Islamic art from around the world. A "playouse" is the reproduction of a 17th-century royal pavilion in Isfahan, Iran. Opened to the public in 2002, Shangri La quickly became a hot-ticket destination for aesthetes. See p. 147.

Taking a surf lesson. Waikiki Beach's consistent lineup of gently rolling waves are the best in the world for first timers. Hire an instructor from one of the many beach-boy stands on the sand or sign up with a school—but do it at the crack of dawn, because the afternoon crowds are daunting. See p. 158.

Listening to three of the island's best musicians jam. Every Sunday Martin Pahinui, George Kuo, and Aaron Mahi play the best of the great Hawaiian songbook—for free—at the Marriott Beach Resort's Moana Terrace. Sip a passionfruit margarita while you absorb the sweet sounds of expertly played slack-key guitar and tunes such as "Pua Lililehua." See p. 182.

Eating ahi poke. Pronounced *ahee pokay*, this snack—made with cubes of fresh tuna—is a favorite on Oahu. You can get it in many permutations, from a basic shoyu-and-onions mixture to haute-ingredient concoctions. Pick up a half-pound at any large grocery store (such as Safeway) or order it at celeb-chef restaurants such as Roy's (where it's made with wasabi aioli, avocado, and flying fish eggs). See p. 157.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Archaeologists speculate that when Polynesians arrived on the islands aboard oversize outrigger canoes about 1,700 years ago, they settled on Oahu first—in Waimanalo, Kailua, and Kaneohe. The areas' fertile soil and fish-packed bays were perfect for the skilled farmers and fishermen. The remnants of this ancient life are still visible at the Ulupo Heiau (p. 140) in Kailua.

THE 18TH CENTURY

Oahu's early Polynesians were a simple patriarchal society, but by the time Captain James Cook stumbled upon the Hawaiian Islands in 1778, spotting Oahu first, it was a nation of island states ruled by *alii* (chiefs)—and they were skirmishing for archipelago domination. Cook's arrival tipped the scale—with Western weapons. By 1795, guns were the deciding factor in the famous Battle of Nuuanu, in which Kamehameha, from the Big Island, and his armed men, drove the Oahu opposition off the Pali (now a popular tourist stop on the Pali Hwy.). The event paved the way for *alii* Kamehameha to unify the islands, becoming Hawaii's first king. Kamehameha the Great made Waikiki—the home of Oahu's chiefs for hundreds of years—his capital. Waikiki was where royalty liked to play—surfing and lounging—and it's still the island's sun-and-fun playground.

But an even more momentous event led to Oahu becoming the chain's "main" island: the English merchant captain William Brown's "discovery" of 30-foot-deep Honolulu Harbor in 1792 or 1793 (the exact date is unknown). From that point on, Honolulu became the hub of trade and commerce, growing during the whaling and sandalwood booms in the early 1800s. Kamehameha moved the capital from Waikiki to Honolulu in 1805. And 15 years later, shops, bars, and bordellos opened, catering to the crews of visiting ships. The Honolulu area is still Oahu's hub of commerce, dominated by skyscrapers that are home to big banks like First Hawaiian and Bank of Hawaii.

Hawaiians had lived under a *kapu* system, strict societal rules governing how the sexes interacted. For example, women were not allowed to eat with men. Breaking a *kapu* could result in death, but with the arrival of *haoles* (foreigners), the system began to unravel. Just 6 months after Kamehameha died in 1819, it was overthrown.

THE 19TH CENTURY

When the brig *Thaddeus* pulled into Honolulu Harbor in 1820, carrying a boatload of American Protestants from the Foreign Mission School in Connecticut, Hawaii's fate was sealed. Queen Kaahumanu, Kamehameha's wife, was an early convert, championing the missionaries' cause. You can see three of the original buildings of the Sandwich Islands Mission at the Mission Houses Museum (p. 144).

Missionaries started schools (the island became known for its high literacy rate), translated the Bible into Hawaiian, and provided health care to native Hawaiians. On the downside, they put women in muumuus, banned the Hawaiian language, and discouraged activities they considered frivolous, such as surfing, in effect hobbling Hawaiian culture to create a Puritan society. At the same time, missionaries made inroads into the budding government, amassing power and title to land. Today, Hawaiians are still trying to rebuild that cultural wealth, while the descendants of those missionaries remain some of Oahu's wealthiest residents. Through the reigns of a succession of kings—Kamehamehas II to V, Lunalilo, and Kalakaua—Hawaii became increasingly Westernized, as American interests took more and more control. Whaling boomed and busted, and then came the rise of sugar. By 1852, sugar-plantation owners brought in the first Chinese laborers to work the fields, and the first Japanese arrived in 1868, setting the stage for today's multicultural population. Many of the Asians you see in the streets of Honolulu are the grandchildren and great grandchildren of plantation workers—including me.

In 1887, a group of residents (many of them descendants of Protestant missionaries) formed the Hawaiian League in opposition to King Kalakaua, whom they felt was an irresponsible leader wreaking havoc on the economy and political stability, making private enterprise difficult. The league wrote a constitution that stripped Kalakaua of his authority. The constitution also stripped Hawaiians of their power—they had to make $600 a year and own taxable property worth $3,000 to vote, which meant two-thirds of the native population didn't qualify to elect leaders.

Kalakaua died in 1891 and his sister, Liliuokalani (who was married to an American, John Dominis), became queen. Wanting to restore power to the Hawaiian monarchy and its people, she faced opposition from a group of white men, led by lawyer and missionary descendent Lorrin A. Thurston. On January 14, 1893, Liliuokalani announced to her cabinet ministers her intention to draft a new constitution. Three days later, the Committee of Safety, an annexationist group, overthrew her. On January 31, the American flag was raised over the government building in downtown Honolulu. To this day, Hawaiian activists do not recognize the unconstitutional act—as it was called in a report commissioned by President Grover Cleveland—and hold that Hawaii is still an independent kingdom. In 1898, Hawaii was annexed to the U.S.

EARLY 20TH CENTURY TO TODAY

Very quickly Oahu started playing a big role in the defense of its new parent nation. In 1907, the military established Fort Shafter, and construction on Pearl Harbor started a year later. (Since then, the militarization of Oahu has never stopped. Today the military occupies 25% of the island, from Pearl Harbor to Bellows Field in Waimanalo).

In the early 1900s, the major sugar-plantation companies started consuming each other, consolidating much like today's media conglomerates, until a core group of agencies emerged—Castle & Cooke, Alexander & Baldwin, Theo H. Davies & Co., C. Brewer & Co., and American Factors. The first two are names you still see today. Much of the suburban sprawl of Central Oahu, a short-sighted development project that has caused massive traffic problems and water shortages, was built by Castle & Cooke Homes. They've gone from growing sugar cane to growing subdivisions. The powerful businesses were collectively known as the Big Five, and the white oligarchy ruled Oahu's money and government until the 1950s.

In 1921, the transformation of Waikiki from wetland to real estate subdivisions started; the Royal Hawaiian Hotel went up in 1927; and Oahu's second-largest industry—tourism—was born.

Between the missionary history, the plantation owners' treatment of Asian labor, the iron grip Caucasian businessmen held on the island's economy through the 1950s, and now the buying up of real estate by retirees and flush investors from the mainland, an unspoken tension lingers between Caucasians, Hawaiians, and Asians on Oahu. No matter how integrated the social fabric appears, and how many mixed marriages take place, history still fuels a simmering resentment beneath the surface of our "melting pot." It's not uncommon to see a fight between servicemen and locals break out in bar-fueled areas like Waikiki.

After more than half a century as a U.S. territory, Oahu became the 50th state in 1959. Who didn't want statehood? Opponents included Honolulu power brokers such as wealthy industrialist Walter F. Dillingham (he's the one who drained

Waikiki, paving the way for today's hive of hotels) and Lorrin P. Thurston, son of the Lorrin A. Thurston who led the overthrow of Queen Liliuokalani. They worried that the *hoi polloi* would not elect "the proper class of men," as Gavan Daws writes in *Shoal of Time*. And they were right. Ninety percent of Hawaiians—many of them former plantation workers, and the sons and daughters of those laborers—voted for statehood, and by the 1960s, Japanese and Chinese leaders such as Inouye were helping lead one of the most forward-thinking state governments in the nation. Being a Democrat became all the rage. The Democratic fervor was sparked by a *haole:* John A. Burns, a former police officer who became Hawaii's second elected governor. Fed up with elite Republicans controlling Honolulu and the rest of the state, the plain-spoken Burns was ready for change, and he groomed a coterie of protégés such as Inouye to lead a new Democratic party that rules to this day. Go to the State Capitol while the Legislature is in session (Jan–May) and you'll see a mix of white, Asian, and Polynesian senators and representatives.

HONOLULU TODAY

Now, almost another half decade has gone by, and the new guard is the old guard. Inouye is viewed as a pork-barrel king, voting in the Senate to give the military ever more entrée to the islands to keep government dollars coming into the state. At the State Capitol in Honolulu, the Democratic party is floundering without any new leadership blood and a Republican is governor.

While Asian-Americans found their power foothold on Oahu, the island was also where the Hawaiian renaissance and sovereignty movement started. The University of Hawaii has established a Hawaiian Studies department, there has been a huge revival of hula, Oahu's first Punana Leo (Hawaiian-language school) opened in 1985, and Hawaiian music now has its own category at the Grammy Awards. Unfortunately, Oahu's last pockets of undeveloped land continue to be eyed by developers, but heightened awareness of what has already slipped away has led to sweet conservationist victories. In January 2006, the City & County of Honolulu stepped up to save Waimea Valley (p. 150), an ancient Hawaiian *ahupuaa* (traditional pie-shaped land division that runs from mountain to sea) and home to a botanical garden run by the Audubon Society, from development by a New York investor. Visitors like you will be able to continue to see one of the most beautiful valleys on the island, free of houses.

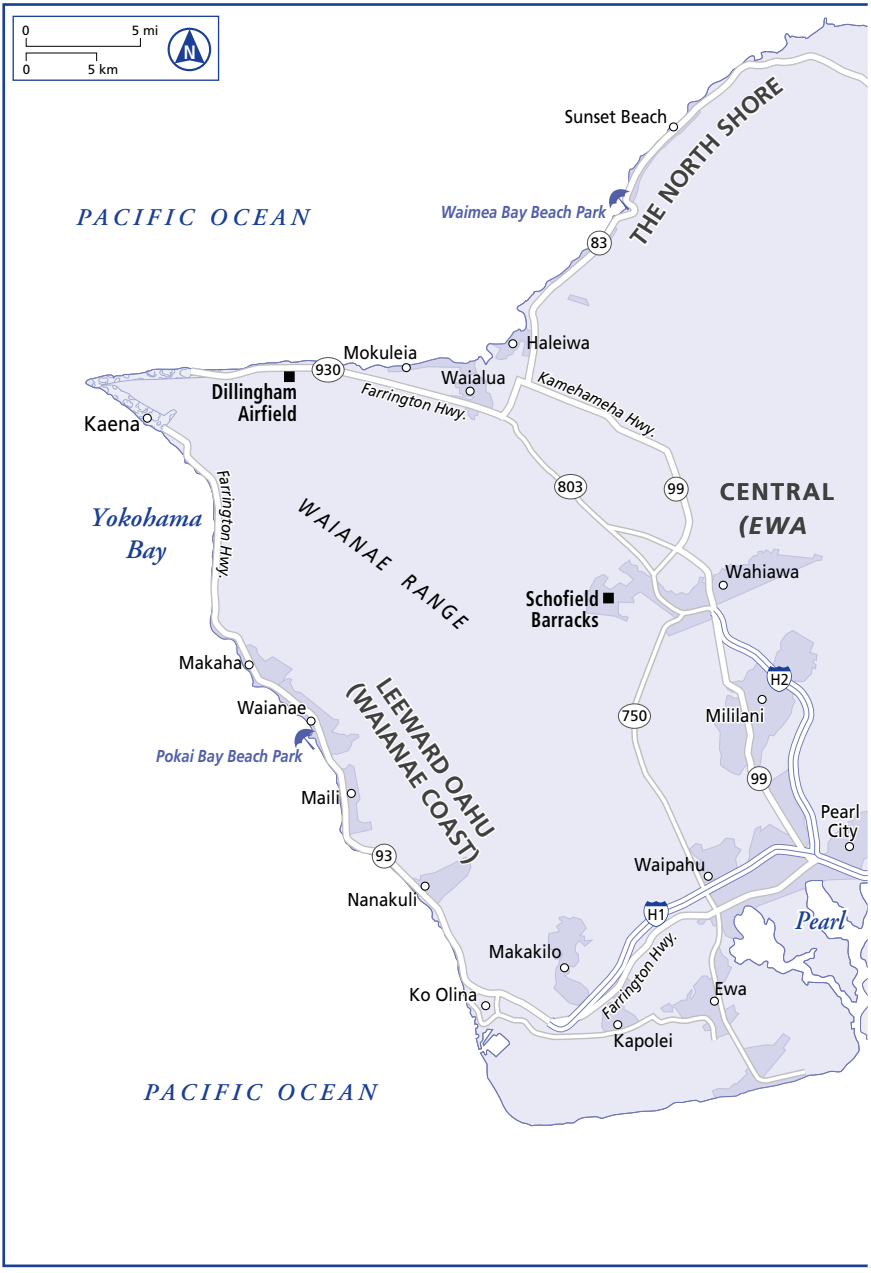
LAY OF THE LAND

The capital of Hawaii is **Honolulu,** where the State Capitol sits on the edge of "downtown"—the business district. The City & County of Honolulu covers all of Oahu, which has a population of almost 900,000, while Honolulu proper is home to about 420,000 residents. Made up of neighborhoods stretching from the airport east to Hawaii Kai, this strip of concentrated development snakes up into the valleys along the coast.

WAIKIKI

The tourist hub—famous Waikiki—is a dense warren of luxury hotels and T-shirt shops, low-slung cinderblock apartment buildings, and tour-selling stands. As in any resort area, splendor and seediness go hand in hand. Lots of locals avoid Waikiki because it's so busy and parking can be hard to find. Yet, the area is also

Oahu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Sunset Beach
THE NORTH SHORE
PACIFIC OCEAN
Waimea Bay Beach Park
83
Haleiwa
Mokuleia
930
Waialua
Dillingham Airfield
Farrington Hwy.
Kamehameha Hwy.
Kaena
803
99
CENTRAL (EWA
Yokohama Bay
Farrington Hwy.
WAIANAE RANGE
Wahiawa
Schofield Barracks
Makaha
H2
Waianae
750
Mililani
Pokai Bay Beach Park
99
Maili
LEEWARD OAHU (WAIANAE COAST)
Pearl City
93
Waipahu
Nanakuli
H1
Pearl
Makakilo
Farrington Hwy.
Ko Olina
Ewa
Kapolei
PACIFIC OCEAN

KAUAI
NIIHAU
Honolulu
MOLOKAI
OAHU
MAUI
LANAI
KAHOOLAWE
Alenuihaha Channel
PACIFIC OCEAN
HAWAII "The Big Island"
THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS
0 100 mi
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Kahuku
Kamehameha Hwy.
Laie
Hauula
Punaluu
KOOLAU RANGE
83
Kaaawa
PACIFIC OCEAN
OAHU PLAIN)
Kualoa Point
Waikane
Waiahole
Kaalaea
THE WINDWARD COAST
Heeia State Park
Heeia
Kahekili Hwy.
Mokapu Point
Kaneohe
Kailua
Kailua Bay
Mokulua Seabird Sanctuaries
Lanikai
H3
H1
Aiea
Halawa Hts.
Wilson Tunnel
Harbor
Moanalua Rd.
78
Likelike Hwy.
61
Pali Tunnels
Kalanianaole Hwy.
Waimanalo Bay
63
Pali Hwy.
Tantalus
Waimanalo
72
U.S. Naval Base
Honolulu Int. Airport
Honolulu
Punchbowl Crater
Manoa Valley
EAST OAHU
Nimitz Hwy.
H1
Makiki
Hawaii Kai
Honolulu Harbor
SANDY BEACH PARK
Waikiki
Hanauma Bay
Kapiolani Park
Diamond Head Crater
Koko Head

a residential place where students, new arrivals, and old-timers alike can still find affordable rents. And with 500-acre **Kapiolani Park** on its edge, Waikiki is sports-central for a town crazy about the outdoors—on weekends, every parking space around the park is nabbed by 9am by people training for the Honolulu marathon, kayaking, paddling, surfing, and playing soccer games or lacrosse. For visitors, Waikiki is a good central spot to be for accommodations, nightlife, shopping, beach culture, and public transportation.

The best way to get a feel for the lay of the land, as it once was, is to take the free tour of the **Waikiki Historic Trail** offered by the Native Hawaiian Hospitality Association. It meets every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 9am at the **Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center stage** (2201 Kalakaua Ave.; ☎ 808/737-6442; www.waikikihistorictrail.com). Created by the late historian George Kanahele and local architect Charlie Palumbo, the trail is marked by bronze plaques. You can follow it yourself, but the 2-hour tour is led by knowledgeable native Hawaiians who offer real insight into the history and local life beyond Waikiki. Wear your protective sun gear because it can get hot.

Geared toward designer-hungry Japanese tourists, Waikiki's main drag, Kalakaua Avenue, is packed with upscale shops such as Prada, Yves Saint Laurent, Hermès, Chanel, and Coach. But it's also home to discount T-shirt shops, cheap-ramen stands, and guys who'll take your picture with their parrots on your shoulder.

KAPAHULU

Outside of Waikiki, another hub of activity is **downtown,** where Honolulu's business and government life is concentrated. Sandwiched between Beretania Street and Nimitz Highway are clusters of high-rises along with open spaces dominated by imposing federal and state buildings. There are also remnants of past Hawaii: Iolani Palace and Kawaiahao Church. Men in Reyn's shirts (the acceptable aloha attire for office types) and women in light suits walk purposefully on the sidewalks. Keep walking west and the streets take a turn for the seedy, with executives giving way to far less affluent souls—you're in **Chinatown.** Aside from being the last safe-ish harbor for people down on their luck, low-rise Chinatown, with blocks of pre–World War II buildings huddling together, is a hot enclave where immigrant merchants, gallery owners, and nightclub impresarios work side by side. The neighborhood, a square between Honolulu Harbor, River Street, Beretania Street, and Bethel Street, is fast being gentrified. (See "The Top Sights & Attractions," p. 137.)

Downtown and Waikiki are surrounded by lots of small residential neighborhoods. **Nuuanu,** just northeast of downtown, is a lush valley filled with historic homes, Queen Emma's Palace, and lots of places of worship—Buddhist temples, a synagogue, and churches that run from Baptist to Unitarian. You'll pass through this area on your way to the Pali Lookout and Kailua.

Heading east, the next valley is **Manoa,** another green swatch that was the domain of wealthy missionary descendents who built grand homes. On the valley floor are a lot of tract homes built in the 1950s and 1960s that cost $55,000 back then and go for $800,000 today. I used to ride horses across the street from Manoa Marketplace, on Woodlawn Drive—the grassy fields are now a housing complex for the University of Hawaii. This sleepy, cool, rainy valley, once a sanctuary for Hawaiian royalty, is now a sought-after neighborhood for new arrivals.

At the back of Manoa is a great hike (see "Active Oahu," p. 157), and at the mouth of the valley is the University of Hawaii.

Further east is **Kaimuki,** where the main drag of Waialae Avenue between Ninth Avenue and Kokohead Avenue is a restaurant row of cuisines ranging from Japanese to contemporary Mediterranean. In between Kaimuki and the end of Waikiki is **Diamond Head,** where fabulous homes line a thin strip of land between the extinct crater and the beach (Doris Duke's Shangri La estate, now a museum, is the most fabulous of all). A run (or walk) up Diamond Head Road yields a sweeping view of the ocean, the low humps of Molokai just visible to your left. Diamond Head then morphs into **Kahala.** Drive along Kahala Avenue, which parallels the shore, and you'll see gaudy mansions alongside old-style wood Hawaiian homes. Yes, this is the most exclusive neighborhood on the island. The area is commercially anchored by Kahala Mall, just off the H-1 freeway.

EASTERN OAHU

From Waikiki, make a right from Kalakaua Avenue onto Diamond Head Road. After you rise and descend into Kahala and drive along Kalanianaole Highway, you're officially in the suburbs, passing neighborhoods such as Aina Haina, Niu Valley, and Kuliouou, until you reach **Hawaii Kai,** a development started by Henry J. Kaiser in the 1950s. It's a sea of houses with little greenery, and there's not much reason to stop unless you know someone who lives there or you're dying to go to Costco (the big boxes have invaded even here). Or you could stop for a cooling shave ice at **Koko Marina Shopping Center** (7192 Kalanianaole Hwy., at Lunalilo Home Rd.) on your way back from snorkeling at Hanauma Bay.

The winding stretch from Hawaii Kai to Waimanalo is where it gets interesting, as this rugged, arid coastline literally undulates. Right past Hawaii Kai is **Hanauma Bay,** famous for its snorkeling, and then bodysurfing mecca **Sandy Beach.** This area is known in Hawaiian as Ka Iwi. The road ascends to a lookout point above **Makapuu Beach.** Pull in for the view of the multihued blues of the water.

Waimanalo is a sleepy little enclave. On the *mauka* (mountain) side of Kalanianaole Highway are farms and plant nurseries, and on the *makai* (ocean) side are homes (many of them vacation rentals, see p. 115). Its main features for visitors are the 5-mile-long white-sand stretch of Waimanalo Bay, and, across the street from Bellows Field, the Honolulu Polo Club (season runs June–Oct, with matches held Sun afternoons at 2:30pm).

THE WINDWARD SIDE

While the northeast coast of the island runs from Kahuku Point on the North Shore to Makapuu Point in the south, the "Windward Side" mostly refers to the towns of **Kailua** and **Kaneohe.** Originally bedroom communities to Honolulu—they're both a quick drive away over the Pali and Likelike highways, respectively—they're bustling hubs in their own right now, with lots of shops and restaurants. While there are no hotels here, there is a hotbed of small bed-and-breakfasts and rental houses.

The main reason non-Windward residents go to **Kailua** is for the beach—2½ miles of it. The northeasterly winds make this big bay a mecca for windsurfers (former world champion Robbie Naish, who has a windsurf shop in town, is from here) and kite surfers. Off the coast is **Popoia Island,** which locals call Flat Island, part of the Hawaii State Seabird Sanctuary. A rich place in precontact days, with fertile taro-growing grounds and fish-filled waters, Kailua was home to powerful

chiefs. According to legend, it's the origin of Menehunes—Hawaii's version of elves, or leprechauns, depending on whom you talk to—who busily built *heiaus* (temples) and fishponds at night. Only one of a handful of *heiaus* remains in Kailua, near Castle Junction at the entrance to Kailua (p. 140).

With the dramatic Koolau Range as a backdrop, **Kaneohe** is often cloudy and wet compared to sunny Kailua. **Kaneohe Bay** doesn't have a good swimming beach—this is where fishermen come, taking off in their boats from **Heeia Kea Boat Harbor.** (Hungry? The harbor's deli serves decent plate lunches.) But the coastline here has interesting cultural features, such as the **Heeia fish pond.** Ancient Hawaiians encircled natural bays with lava rock, allowing young fish to come and go, but keeping mature fish inside for harvest—it was early aquaculture and kept the people supplied with food.

On the left side of Kaneohe Bay (a military outpost off-limits to civilians) is **Kualoa Regional Park,** where the water is shallow and reefy, and not great for swimming. Across the highway and offshore is Chinaman's Hat, or **Mokolii,** a small island and bird preserve. Check tide charts (they're published in the free newspaper, *Honolulu Weekly*) to find out when it's low tide—that's when you can swim out to Mokolii.

Heading north along Kamehameha Highway, which requires a leisurely driving pace on this two-lane road, the next inlet is 4,000-acre **Kualoa Ranch and Activity Club** (p. 169), which includes picturesque **Kaaawa Valley,** where scenes from *Jurassic Park* and other films were shot.

The next inlet is picturesque (but with murky water) **Kahana Bay,** across from which is **Ahupuaa O Kahana State Park,** one of only two publicly owned *ahupuaa,* or Hawaiian land divisions (the other is Waimea Valley on the North Shore). It's like a jungle, dark and shadowy with dense trees and plants.

The little-developed coast continues, dotted by the tiny towns of Punaluu, Hauula, and Laie (home of the Polynesian Cultural Center, p. 152), where there isn't much more than sundry stores, 7-Elevens and gas stations, and roadside stands selling fruits and vegetables. There are some vacation rentals along here, though, for people who really want to get away from it all.

This side of the island ends at **Kahuku,** a former sugar-plantation town. Now it's dotted with aquaculture farms, which in turn has resulted in shrimp shacks and lunch wagons (p. 134) serving the crustaceans in many permutations.

CENTRAL OAHU

Two mountain ranges—**Waianae** and **Koolau**—run parallel down Oahu. The plain that lies between them is Central Oahu. This area was once covered with pineapple and sugar cane, but as those industries have waned, the fields have made way for subdivisions. Now, Central Oahu is the province of suburban commuters, and what you pass through to get to the North Shore. Driving, take H-1, then H-2, to **Wahiawa,** down the road from **Schofield Barracks.** A town that's a mix of plantation-labor descendents and military, Wahiawa has a seedy, low-rise feel, with lots of pawn shops and tattoo parlors. But nearby is also where you'll find the Kukaniloko birthing stones (p. 141).

NORTH SHORE

When Honoluluans need a miniescape, they take a drive to the North Shore on the weekend, what we call the "country." As you approach the coastline, driving

on the two-lane road passing through the flat, red-dirt pineapple fields (which won't be there much longer), and see the long stretch of coast appear, your spirit will surge. Sounds corny, but it's true. The North Shore stretches from **Kaena Point** to **Kahuku Point,** for roughly 20 miles of famous surf breaks.

You first hit **Haleiwa,** the North Shore's main town. Although the area has become a millionaire's playground (there's a housing crisis for locals looking for affordable rent, as mainland and foreign investors buy second vacation homes here), Haleiwa has maintained a rural-town feel thanks to its designation as a State Historic, Cultural and Scenic District in 1984. Shopping centers like the Haleiwa Market Place are two-story affairs, built of wood and made to look quaint.

All along the coast, locals refer to surf spots, beaches, and dive spots as landmarks—Waimea, Shark's Cove, Sunset, and Yokohama.

LEEWARD SIDE

Hot and arid, Oahu's Waianae Coast has no chichi shopping centers, lush botanical gardens, or deluxe resorts. As you pass through the towns of **Nanakuli, Waianae,** and **Makaha,** you'll see houses surrounded by junked cars and dirt yards. The Leeward side is home to one of the largest Native Hawaiian communities in the state. Almost 20% of the area's population lives at the poverty level, and a growing number of homeless seek refuge on the beaches. But there are also inviting beaches such as Maile and Makaha. So even Waianae is changing—as the sort of last frontier of development, subdivisions are springing up and retirees from the mainland are taking advantage of the lowest prices in town. Also, Waianae's very lack of development is appealing to a new type of tourist looking for an "authentic" Oahu.

GETTING TO & AROUND OAHU

Twenty-five airlines fly into **Honolulu International Airport,** but the five major ones coming from the mainland are American Airlines, Air Canada, Continental, Delta, and United Airlines. The locally based Aloha Airlines and Hawaiian Air also have flights from the West Coast. In June 2006, a new carrier called go! began operating interisland flights between Honolulu and Lihue, Kahului, Hilo, and Kailua-Kona.

Fares to Oahu vary wildly by time of year. During the week of Christmas, a round-trip ticket can run as high as $1,200; at other times it can drop to as low as $500, depending on where you're departing from and when you're traveling. Both Aloha and Hawaiian Air run frequent sales (it's worthwhile to sign up for their newsletters, which publish the sale rates), but their reach only extends to a handful of cities on the West Coast. For more information on getting the best air prices to Hawaii, see p. 437.

GETTING TO & FROM THE AIRPORT

Central Honolulu is a 15- to 45-minute ride from the airport, depending on the dreaded traffic situation. If you're staying in the city, there are a few transportation options to choose from. If you've booked accommodations outside of Honolulu, I recommend that you rent a car because there is no convenient public transportation.

If you're headed to Waikiki and you don't want to rent a car, the easiest option is to take a **taxi** (AMPCO Express; ☎ 808/861-8294), which costs about $28, but

Road Warrior

Oahu is a driving island. During the week, the H-1 is bumper to bumper from 8 to 9am as everyone from around the island pours into the city, and then again from 4 to 7pm as everyone goes back home. Here are distances and average drive times to points around the island from Waikiki.

Destination	Miles	Time
Haleiwa	29	50 minutes
Hanauma Bay	11	25 minutes
Honolulu Airport	9	20 minutes
Kailua	14	25
Laie	34	1 hour
Makaha Beach	36	1 hour
Sunset Beach	37	1 hour
USS *Arizona* Memorial	12	30 minutes
Waikele Premium Outlets	17	40 minutes

can go up to $35 depending on your distance from the airport and how heavy the traffic. Look for the taxi dispatchers on the center median across the street from where you come out of baggage claim. Or you can prearrange a taxi from **Charley's Taxis and Limousines** (☎ 877/531-2333 or 808/531-1333; www.charleystaxi.com), a 68-year-old family-owned business. The company has all kinds of fancy meet-and-greet packages, but a simple taxi (you can book in advance or call as soon as you get off the plane) for a maximum of six people is $35.

To save money, you can take the **Airport Waikiki Express** (☎ 800/831-5541 or 808/539-9400; $8, children under 3 free), which will take you to any hotel in Waikiki. From 6 to 10am, buses leave every 25 to 35 minutes, and after 10am, they leave every 20 to 30 minutes.

Another good shuttle service, **Airport-Island Shuttles** (☎ 800/624-9554 or 808/521-2121; www.shuttleguys.com), will go door-to-door anywhere on the island. So if you've rented a house out in Waimanalo or a vacation rental apartment in Waikiki and don't want to rent a car, go with this service. A ride to Waikiki is $24 for one or two people. The most expensive ride is $90 to Hauula or Laie. Shuttles are dispatched from 4am to midnight all week, although the reservation office is closed on weekends.

GETTING AROUND OAHU

Honolulu is fairly navigable by public transport, but renting a car will help you make the most of your time if you want to explore the island.

The best deal by far is to book ahead with www.orbitz.com because of the deal it has with Dollar Rent-a-Car. Through Orbitz, you can get a compact car from Dollar for as low as $148 per week, which comes out to $21 a day—and that

includes taxes and fees. The price is a steal compared to renting directly from the rental companies, which charge about $40 a day with tax.

All the major renters are located at the airport: **Avis** (☎ 800/321-3712 or 808/843-553), **Budget** (☎ 800/527-7000 or 808/836-1700), **Dollar Rent-a-Car** (☎ 800/800-4000 or 808/831-2331), **Hertz** (☎ 800/654-3011 or 808/831-3500), **National** (☎ 800/277-7368 or 808/831-3800), **Alamo** (☎ 800/327-9633 or 808/833-4585), **Enterprise** (☎ 800/736-8222 or 808/836-2213), and **Thrifty** (☎ 877/283-0898 or 800/367-2277).

The rental companies have shuttles that will pick you up and take you to their car parks. Enterprise is the most reasonable, charging about $31 a day, with taxes, for a week's use of a compact car.

Traveling by TheBus

Oahu has a pretty good bus system that goes to most nooks and corners of the island—if you have the time and patience for it. All those stops can slow things down. The fare is $2, and you get one transfer. The bus hub is Ala Moana Shopping Center. For full routes and schedules, visit www.thebus.org. There's an online At Your Service Custom Trip Planner, but when the system is overwhelmed, it goes down. Don't fret: You can call ☎ 808/848-5555 and actually speak to a real person. You might have to wait a bit, but you'll eventually get someone to answer route and schedule questions.

ACCOMMODATIONS, BOTH STANDARD & NOT

Oahu's hotels are concentrated in Waikiki, where a warren of accommodations run from downscale, two-story, cinderblock cheapies to one of the best hotels in the world (the Halekulani). There are lots of comfortable, plain options, big chains (Hilton, Sheraton, Hyatt, Marriott) that aren't cheap, and the famous, historic big three: Sheraton Moana Surfrider, Royal Hawaiian, and Halekulani.

But there's a whole island beyond Honolulu, where hotels are few and vacation rental houses abound. This is the best way to experience island living. For a

Round the Island on TheBus

TheBus is a cheap way to go round the island. For $2, you get one transfer (you have to ask the driver for it), which allows you to get off and look around and get back on the next bus. If you want to make more stops, you'll have to pay $2 every other time. At Ala Moana Center, take the No. 52 Wahiawa–Circle Island bus (it departs every half-hour from 6:30am to 5:16pm, then every hour until 8:15pm) for a clockwise trip that goes to the North Shore, stopping at Haleiwa Beach Park, Turtle Bay Resort, the Polynesian Cultural Center in Laie, Hauula, Kaaawa, and Kahaluu. When the bus reaches Kahaluu, it turns into No. 55 and runs along the Windward Coast to Kaneohe, returning to Ala Moana over the Pali Highway. To do the trip in reverse, take the No. 55 Kaneohe–Circle Isle bus. This can be an especially nice ride if you stop in Haleiwa for dinner and get back on for the return trip through downtown.

The Lingo: Local Directions

In Honolulu, two markers are Diamond Head and Ewa, which stand for east and west. If I'm telling someone to meet me at a restaurant and I say it's on King Street, my friend is likely to ask, "Where on King Street, Diamond Head or Ewa of Keeaumoku Street?" So if someone tells you something is just Diamond Head of something, they're saying it's east, in the direction of the old crater.

The other two markers are the mountains and ocean. If something is in the direction of the mountains, we say "on the *mauka* side." If it's in the direction of the water, we say "on the *makai* side."

little more money (and sometimes less, if you go with a more alternative form of accommodations), you can get a feel of real island life away from the madding Waikiki crowd. It's up to you to decide what kind of a vacation you want to have.

BED & BREAKFASTS, CONDOS & VACATION RENTALS

Lower-cost B&Bs and vacation-home rental opportunities are sprinkled throughout Honolulu, and the best ones rent through the agencies listed below. Outside of the city, B&Bs are concentrated in Kailua, on the Windward Side of the island. The easiest way to book a room in a home, bed-and-breakfast, private condo, or a whole beachfront house is through an agency. It ensures that the property has been vetted; and you have the option of moving to another lodging, through the agency at no extra cost, should accommodations not be to your liking upon arrival.

Note: Some unlicensed, and sometimes unmonitored, B&Bs and vacation rentals have popped up in Kailua, prompting a group of residents, annoyed by parked cars and noise, to organize and try to shut down the B&Bs in the neighborhood. In this chapter, I've listed only legal and respected businesses that regulate their guests and are considerate of their neighbors.

To my mind the three most reliable and well-established companies for aboveboard rentals and B&Bs on the island are:

Be Back Hawaii (☎ 877/4-BEBACK, 808/732-6618, or 808/732-2921; www.beback.com): Efficiently run by German travel agent Brigitte Baccus and her husband David, a former art-gallery owner, this agency represents more than 300 properties in Hawaii, about 100 of them on Oahu. The modus operandi here is hands on. "They're turning every doghouse and closet into a vacation rental on this island," sighed David when we last spoke. "So Brigitte and I go out every weekend to inspect rentals and find new ones. We periodically stay the night in the properties we represent because we want to see what it's like from the inside out. That way, we can guarantee that you'll enjoy your stay." The selection runs from luxury beachfront estates in the exclusive neighborhood of Kahala to small studios in often rainy Kaneohe; and from family-friendly homes right on the beach to convenient apartments in Waikiki. With such a wide selection (and this agency really does it all—B&Bs, condos, and vacation-home rentals), rates range all the

way from $75 to $500 a night, but the average cost is between $100 and $120. Their well-designed website has pictures of most of the properties they represent.

Bed and Breakfast Honolulu (☎ 800/288-4666 or 808/595-7533; www.hawaiibnb.com): For accommodations at the lower end of the price scale, with nightly rates ranging from $55 for a Waikiki studio to $250 for a four-bedroom house in Kailua, Bed and Breakfast Honolulu is the agency to call. It takes bookings for more than 100 modest but nice properties on Oahu (only a few of which are pictured on its website) and states quite candidly that its properties, which tend to be smaller and thus cheaper, are better for couples than families. (This company also doesn't offer the level of personal service that Be Back Hawaii does, but that also keeps their prices lower.) To get a better idea of what they offer, I recently visited a number of the company's properties, including three studio units in a low-rise cinderblock apartment building in Waikiki that may well be the best deals in town (2 nights $78/night, 4 nights $68/night, 5 nights $48/night). Yes, you get what you pay for: a windowless apartment, but one that's spotlessly clean and fully equipped, with a useable kitchen, access to a pool, cable TV, shower, and a fold-out futon couch for far less than you'd pay elsewhere. The condos were just a block from Kuhio Beach. The agency also represents B&Bs all over the island, as well as a handful of full-scale, multibedroom vacation rentals (but as I said before, it specializes in smaller units).

Hawaii's Best Bed & Breakfast (☎ 800/262-9912 or 808/692-0100; www.bestbnb.com): Though it's now based on Oahu, the company represents only a handful of properties on the island—but they're all top-notch. Accommodations range from an antique-laden Diamond Head B&B to a lovely one-bedroom apartment on the ground floor of a home on the North Shore. Rates range from $100 to $280 a night, depending on the size of the property and the season.

GOING DIRECT TO THE OWNERS

Many people buy apartments, condos, and homes in Waikiki as investments, renting them out to pay the mortgage. In fact, throughout Oahu, there are literally hundreds who directly rent out their apartments, rooms in their homes, or even whole houses to vacationers. Nightly rates at these sorts of properties are quite low compared to hotels—and they usually go down the longer you stay. Factor in the savings on restaurant meals (they all come equipped with kitchens) and you have the makings of a real deal.

Vacation Rentals by Owner (www.vrbo.com) is the foremost clearinghouse of those properties that don't work through agencies. Rentals aren't vetted by VRBO, so there is some risk involved, but for the ones I've checked out—in and outside of Honolulu—the owners turned out to be gracious, on-the-ball hosts and the accommodations matched up with their online listings and photos.

Craig's List (www.craigslist.com) launched its Honolulu section in 2004, and it quickly became another good source for vacation rentals. With digital images included in many of the listings, it's easy to spot ones that are clean and well kept. I have also visited a number of these (many of them are also on www.vrbo.com) and found that they, too, lived up to the billings posted on the site.

On both websites you can find everything from a $52-a-night Waikiki studio to a three-bedroom beachfront home right on the North Shore's famous Sunset Beach for $500 a night.

A Plug for Travel Packages

by Pauline Frommer

Before we get into a discussion of the many hotels on Oahu, I'm going to suggest that travelers who put budget first should read this box and perhaps turn to a travel packager to put together your vacation. Oahu is one of the top destinations in the world for travel packages—by which I mean travel products that bundle together airfare, hotel, and sometimes a rental car at one reasonable price—because it has so many hotel rooms that need to be filled year-round (and those large companies that guarantee this are able to get discounts that you, the individual traveler, could never touch). Though the cheapest of these packages traditionally use mainstream, somewhat dull Waikiki hotels, booking a travel package can result in big savings, in some cases overall prices of $100 a day or less for airfare, rental car, and hotel (not including food and gas). No, you won't have the chicest of lodgings, but you will get a clean, convenient place to stay (with private bathroom), which is fine for those simply using their hotel as a place to crash after long days exploring the island. Packages can also yield savings on pricey, beachfront hotels, so even luxury travelers should consider this route when booking.

Some companies allow travelers to customize their packages, choosing dates of travel, hotels, make of car, etc. But those who can be more flexible with time and accommodations get the very best deals: ready-made packages that take advantage of seasonal downtime (post-holiday periods offer especially good values) and have fixed dates and hotels.

Your first stop when shopping for a travel package should be California-based **Pleasant Holidays** (☎ 800/742-9244; www.pleasantholidays.com), which has focused on Hawaii since 1962. The prices on its seasonal specials are tough to beat (Pleasant periodically runs the 1-week-in-Hawaii-from-$500-on-up ads in the newspaper). Usually, its deals come with restrictions, such as Wednesday or Thursday departures only. But when you see a great deal, chances are it will soon be gone, so grab it while you can

Here are two examples of what you can find at these two websites:

"I'm not looking to make a million dollars," says Dawn Rogers, which is why she charges just $79 a night for her 19th-floor corner studio in the big **Pacific Monarch condo/hotel** (444 Niu St., at Ala Wai; ☎ 808/223-0467; hawaiinshine@aol.com). The room is small, but it has a sweeping view of the mountains, the Ala Wai Canal, and a sliver of Waikiki Beach. It comes equipped with a double bed, a small futon for kids, minifridge, coffeemaker, microwave oven, air-conditioning, cable TV, and a phone. You can also use the building's pool and coin-operated laundry facilities. Rogers recommends booking 2 to 3 months in advance, but she sometimes has last-minute openings. Small efficiency lodgings like this are good for the active couple who plans on doing a lot of sightseeing and just needs a home base to sleep.

(get on their mailing list and you'll always have a heads-up). It's also important to have high-speed Internet access because the Pleasant site is slow, clumsy, and anything but pleasant to use. Nonetheless, they are usually the price leader. I was recently able to find a flight from San Francisco, 6 days at the absolutely fine Castle Island Colony Hotel on Oahu, and a compact car for $559 per person, including taxes, and a lei greeting at the airport—an unbeatable price. Also, Pleasant Holidays has the most extensive choice of hotels, due to its partnerships with a long list of companies.

Pleasant rules when it comes to fixed packages, but when it comes to customized packages, the competition moves in. Shop on the Web among the Big Three—**Orbitz** (☎ 877/672-4893; www.orbitz.com), **Travelocity** (☎ 888/709-5983; www.travelocity.com), and **Expedia** (☎ 800/342-8516; www.expedia.com). They all offer good deals and have far more user-friendly websites than Pleasant. For non–West Coast gateways, their prices sometimes beat Pleasant's rates.

You should also see what **Funjet Vacations** (☎ 888/558-6654; www.funjet.com) has to offer. They specialize in hotel-and-air packages, with a wide range of hotels to choose from, without the rental car. The prices always look lower than the other package dealers, but when you add the vehicle cost—and it's hard to get around in Hawaii without a car—its prices are comparable to the competition's.

Other companies that periodically run excellent specials for airfare and hotel (and sometimes car rental) include:

- **Travel Services** (☎ 800/675-4050 or 925/304-5000; www.off2hawaii.com);
- **Panda Travel** (☎ 800/303-6702 or 808/738-3898; www.pandaonline.com);
- **ATA Vacations** (☎ 800/442-8952; www.atavacations.com); and
- **United Vacations** (☎ 888/854-3899; www.unitedvacations.com)

In 2005, David and Elle Cholokian redid their **Kaaawa home** (51–346 #B Hauhele St., Kaaawa, HI 96730; ☎ 808/237-8345; vacationinhawaii@yahoo.com) to create two rentals. The lush enclave, at the foot of the majestic Koolau mountain range on a quiet residential street, includes a small (manmade) waterfall trickling into a large fishpond. The back garden is filled with hibiscus bushes and plumeria trees. Guests can choose from a Japanese-style cottage ($660–$780 per week, depending on the dates) with shoji doors and the three-bedroom main house ($150–$250 per night) that's made sexy with Balinese furnishings. Kaaawa is about a 45-minute drive from Honolulu on the Windward Coast, a sleepy area where you can clear your head. If I were flying all the way to Hawaii and wanted to experience real island life, I'd stay here.

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Average price per night for one double room: $ = Up to $100; $$ = $101 to $150; $$$ = $151 to $200; $$$$ = $201 and up

New Otani Kaimana Beach Hotel ★★ kids (Waikiki, $$$–$$$$, p. 111)
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Average price per night for one double room: $ = Up to $100; $$ = $101 to $150; $$$ = $151 to $200; $$$$ = $201 and up

WAIKIKI

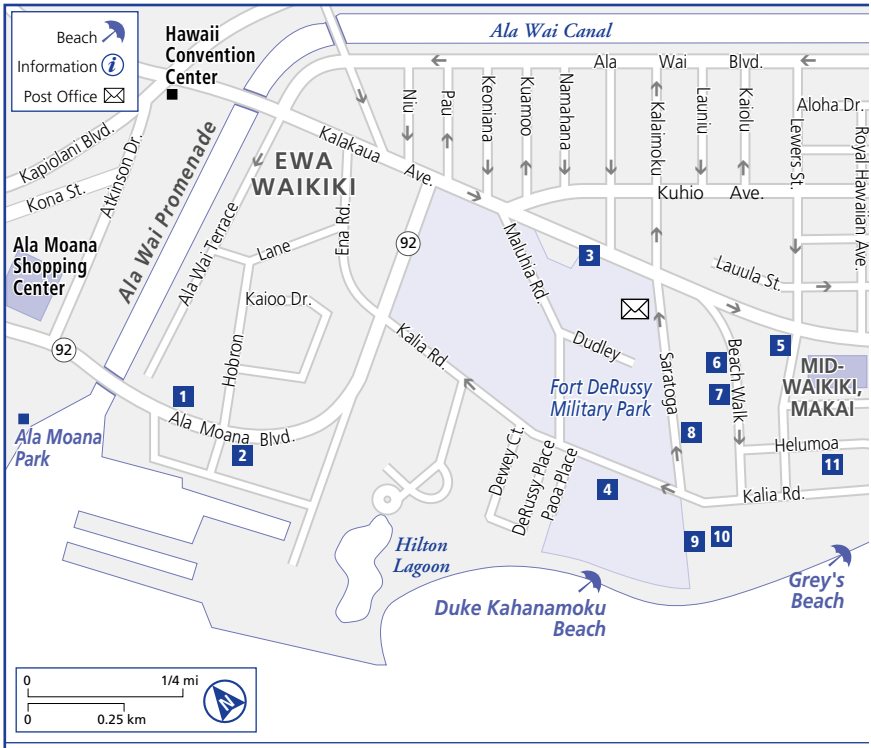
Unlike other islands where resorts are sprinkled all around, Oahu's hotels are clustered in Waikiki, with only two major resorts—Ko Olina and Turtle Bay Resort—situated outside Honolulu. It may not be the blissed-out, far-from-the-madding-crowd atmosphere for which you yearned, but it's certainly the most convenient, with lots of public transport to destinations outside Honolulu, access to shopping (of course), and the best waves for aspiring surfers. You can find accommodations, from a hostel to one of the best hotels in the world, to fit every budget.

Waikiki used to be riddled with low-slung, Polynesian-themed, super-affordable hotels, the kind where you could imagine Gidget sipping a (virgin) daiquiri poolside. But these 1960s relics have steadily been razed to make way for redevelopment, and now there is just one enclave left: two rows on parallel Beachwalk and Saratoga Road, at the gateway to Waikiki. Here are the best old-school options in the area.

$ I'm a sucker for retro, so I'd choose to stay at the **Kai Aloha** ★ (235 Saratoga Rd.; ☎ 808/923-6723; kai.aloha@gte.net) even if it didn't have some of the cheapest prices in town. The family-owned three-story hotel celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2006, and its fly-in-amber vibe is what attracts its left-of-center (much of it European) clientele. If you're into chain hotels, you'll think this place is shabby; if you like vintage rattan furniture and hand-carved monkeypod lamps, you'll love it. Sure, the beds are on the soft side and the TVs are on their last cathode ray, but that's a good or bad thing depending on your style. All rooms are either a studio or one-bedroom apartment (like a Manhattan railroad apartment) with kitchenette. Studios start at $74, and one-bedrooms, which have two trundle beds in the living room and two twins in the bedroom, start at $84. Parking is available across the street for $11 per 24 hours. There's no restaurant in Kai Aloha, but it's a 5-minute walk from the glamorous Halekulani. What you save on lodging at Kai Aloha, you can spend on cocktails at Halekulani's Lewers Lounge (p. 184) or brunch at Orchids (p. 131). Just down the street is the pleasant prix-fixe Italian restaurant **Caffelatte** (339 Saratoga Road; ☎ 808/924-1414), where Milan native Laura Proserpio will make you feel at home. Fort DeRussy beach is 2 minutes away.

$$$$ Behind Kai Aloha on Seaside Avenue is **The Breakers** (250 Beachwalk; ☎ 808/923-3181; www.breakers-hawaii.com), where mainland snowbirds book

Where to Stay in Waikiki



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Waikiki Parc **11**

their rooms months in advance (some of them look like they've been doing it since the place opened in 1955). I love the laidback island feel and the small, intimate scale. You enter into a courtyard, in the center of which is a blue pool surrounded by a two-story reef of rooms, all done up quasi-Japanese style with faux-shoji sliding doors. The rooms have been modernized, unfortunately, with generic-chain-hotel bedspreads and furniture, but a midcentury tiki vibe still lingers. Rooms are all equipped with kitchenettes, and, of course, the garden apartments opening up to the pool are more expensive. Singles cost $96 to $103, doubles are $99 to $105, garden suites are $130 to $171, and you'll have to tack on $10 for an additional person. There's a snack bar and lounge, and across the street is a good Japanese restaurant, **Sushi Koh** (255 Beachwalk; ☎ 808/923-5526).

$–$$$$ The locally owned **Queen Kapiolani Hotel** ★ kids (150 Kapahulu Ave.; ☎ 808/922-4671; www.queenkapiolani.com) is a favorite with *kamaaina* (locals) in town from the neighboring islands. They like the location—at the quieter end of the busy Kalakaua strip, across the street from Kapiolani Park, 2 minutes from the beach, near Starbucks—and the low prices (a standard room with an ocean view is just $80 if you book online). The grand high-ceilinged lobby is hung with chandeliers and portraits of Hawaiian royalty. The rooms are more modest—generic mauve-toned spaces with hideous floral bedspreads—but the beds are firm and the spaces clean. If you can snag a corner oceanview room, you get a breathtaking vista that sweeps from Diamond Head to Ewa. The park and beach proximity make this a good choice for families with active kids. If you want a big full-service hotel, the Queen Kapiolani is the best deal in town.

What's the Room Situation Like?

Oahu gets about 4.5 million visitors a year—and 2005 had monthly record-breaking numbers of tourists arriving. At the same time, the number of hotel rooms has decreased by 3%, as hotel operators convert rooms to timeshares and condos. The result is that in the second quarter, the island saw a hotel occupancy rate of 81.3%, with an average room rate of about $132.

Even with the array of alternative accommodations—B&Bs, home stays, and private condo rentals—sometimes it's impossible to find a room. Aside from the weeks of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's, Oahu doesn't really have a season—but events and conventions make the occupancy rates swell. When the Honolulu Marathon occurs in early December, hotels are booked solid. In fact, growing numbers of sports events like the Century Bike Ride in September and the International Triathlon World Championships in October keep Honolulu booked year-round.

The good news is that after years of no hotel growth in Waikiki, a spate of building that started in 2005 will bring hundreds of new rooms to the neighborhood by 2009. The bad news is that if you visit before then, you'll still experience the crunch.

$–$$$$ Remember the opening scene of *Hawaii Five-O,* with Steve McGarrett standing on a balcony? That's the **Renaissance Waikiki Ilikai Hotel** (1777 Ala Moana Blvd.; ☎ 800/245-4524 or 808/949-3811; www.ilikaihotel.com). In the 1960s and 1970s, this hotel was the *it* spot, with a hot nightclub and restaurant (Elvis and Mickey Mantle stayed here). It fell out of favor and was looked on as outdated in the 1980s and 1990s, but a huge renovation has given the hotel new life, with a Polynesian-boutique look in the airy lobby outfitted with tasteful rattan furniture. The *Lost* crew stays here when the hit series is filming. Located at the edge of Waikiki, it's closer to Ala Moana Shopping Center than Kuhio Beach. A basic room—crisply outfitted with sleek wood furniture and upholstered armchairs—in the hotel proper starts at $280, but the Ilikai also has condos, and through a management agency the owners rent out their apartments for rates that range from $50 to $500 depending on the type of room (the furnishings vary greatly) and your dates. To book condos, contact Pat Carsten (☎ 808/271-5957; www.ilikai.com). The Ilikai has one of the best Hawaiian Regional Cuisine restaurants in Waikiki, **Canoes,** where you can get dishes like kalua-pig quesadillas.

$$–$$$ If you're traveling with kids and want to be in the thick of things, the **Ohana Islander Waikiki** (270 Lewers St.; ☎ 800/462-6262 or 808/923-7711; www.ohanahotels.com) might be your best pick. *Ohana* means "family" in Hawaiian, and though these pastel-colored, rather sterile-looking rooms aren't stylish, they've been created with the needs of families in mind. All are spacious enough for extra beds, and every single room in the hotel connects. Even the prices are right for cash-strapped parents: Though the rack rate is $219, nearly constant Web specials offered on the Ohana site can bring the price down to a more modest $119. As for the area of the hotel, Lewers Street is undergoing a drastic makeover—in 2005, old hotels were demolished to make way for the new

What's All That Tax?

In Hawaii, lodging—including hostels and vacation rentals—is subject to an 11.416% tax, a combination of the 4.166% state tax and 7.25% transient tax. So be sure to factor all of it in when you're budgeting for your vacation.

Waikiki Beach Walk retail complex, slated to open in late 2006. At the entrance to the sparkling new promenade of consumerism is the Islander. The Islander will itself be undergoing renovations in 2006, but it will remain open. If you happen to be in town for a parade, such as the Kamehameha Day Parade held on June 11, book a room on the Diamond Head side of the building—you'll have an amazing bird's-eye view of the procession.

$$–$$$ Hawaiiana Hotel (260 Beachwalk; ☎ 808/923-3811; www.hawaiianahotel.com) is the most upscale of the old-school spots, whitewashed into a *Fantasy Island* gentility. It's a complex of two courtyards, with two pools, and like The Breakers, it's been around since 1955 and has a lot of older repeat visitors. The white, breezy rooms have kitchenettes and big tubs. It's the kind of place where you can mix up your own mai tais and lounge around with no pretension—you can even reserve a grill and host your own poolside barbecue. Rooms run from $105 for a standard that sleeps two to $235 for a one-bedroom suite that can accommodate up to four people.

$$$–$$$$ The beachfront **New Otani Kaimana Beach Hotel** ★★ kids (2863 Kalakaua Ave.; ☎ 800/356-8264 or 808/923-1555; www.kaimana.com) is another islander favorite, but at the next level up. The prices may seem steep (standard rooms start at $170), but they're the most reasonable of the beachfront establishments. Across the street from Kapiolani Park, Kaimana is the place to stay if you're looking for some quiet or are sports-minded (and have a sporty family). There are public tennis courts, a jogging path, a workout station, surf breaks, and Honolulu's best swimming beach at the hotel's doorstep. Take a 6am walk up Diamond Head Road to see the sunrise with Molokai in the distance. The hotel even has a bit of history—in the 1800s, *Treasure Island* author Robert Louis Stevenson lounged and wrote beneath the hau trees in what is now the open-air Hau Tree Lanai restaurant (popular brunch spot). The basic rooms are tiny but well appointed in a mainstream-hotel kind of way. I go to the Sunset Lanai Lounge for end-of-day cocktails and pupu.

$$–$$$$ For the couple who craves a grown-up getaway, the **Outrigger Luana Waikiki** ★ (2045 Kalakaua Ave.; ☎ 800/688-7444 or 808/955-6000; www.outrigger.com), refurbished and reopened in 2005, is a good option. The studios and one-bedroom condo suites have a clean, executive look—wood headboards, stone floors, and bronze hula-girl lamps—plus kitchenettes or kitchens. Located at the very start of Waikiki, the Luana is about a 10-minute walk from Fort DeRussy Beach (you walk across a park), and if you get an oceanview room, it's great for sunset watching through a picture window. Regular rates are $240 to $375, but if you book online and there are rooms available, you might be able to find a price as low as $135 to $179.

$$$–$$$$ Oahu's newest minichain is Aqua Hotels & Resorts. In 5 years, hotel veteran Mike Paulin has parlayed his resort management company from one property to five Waikiki "condotels." A local developer converts hotels into condos and Paulin manages the rental aspects for the owners, putting the "tel" into the operation. The best-located property is **Aqua Bamboo** ★ (2425 Kuhio Ave.; ☎ 808/922-9473; www.aquaresorts.com). Condotel means even the standard rooms ($155) are like really nice apartments (most, but not all, have kitchenettes). Although this might seem like a splurge, if you're looking to spend less than $100 a night, you can save money by cooking. It's also the chicest-looking place in this price range, for travelers who value the appearance of things: rooms are in ivory and black, with deliciously firm beds, soft pillows, and big black tubs. The spa, just opened in 2005, is in a small building beside the pool. Top-notch licensed massage and occupational therapists (ask for the excellent Aida Alcantara) offer Swedish, *lomilomi* (traditional Hawaiian-style), and hot-stone-massage treatments, as well as facials and body scrubs (the ginger-honey version makes you feel as smooth as a baby's inner arm). If you book for a week, nights 6 and 7 are free. Check the website for deals; in fall 2005, it offered 10% off all rack rates. Aqua Bamboo is often a featured property with many of the travel-package companies listed on p. 104.

$$$–$$$$ Want to learn how to string a lei or go for a canoe ride? **Outrigger Reef on the Beach** kids (2169 Kalia Rd.; ☎ 800/688-7444 or 808/923-3111; www.outriggerhotels.com) is Outrigger Hotels' activity-packed flagship beachfront hotel. If you're looking for a quintessential Hawaii tourist experience, this property offers it in spades—from the breezy open-air lobby adjacent to the pool to the blue-and-white Hawaiian-quilt-patterned bedspreads. Although it's undergoing renovation (which includes enlarging rooms) during 2006, it remains fully operational. The Reef isn't cheap, with rack rates running from $300 to $530 (for a one-bedroom), but the Outrigger chain's excellent online booking will automatically give you the best rates for your dates. For example, in December 2005, the website listed the price for a standard city-view room as $175 in mid-May 2006. The rooms are hotel-chain clinical, but the beds are firm and the beach is right

A Second Home for the Brave in Hawaii

The military-owned **Hale Koa Hotel** (2055 Kalia Rd.; ☎ 808/955-0555 or 808/367-6027; www.halekoa.com; **$–$$**) in Waikiki has a mission: "To operate a first class hotel and recreation facility at affordable prices for military members and their families." Just down the road from the chichi Halekulani, the 66-acre Hale Koa is like any other big chain hotel, with two towers of rooms, a big blue pool, a luau—but for service people only. There's a special icon on the website just for "Operation Iraqi Freedom" reservations. Who qualifies? Active-duty members of all the armed forces, retirees, honorably discharged veterans, public-health staffers, and many more categories (check the website for details). The prices are bargain basement. For enlisted men and women, the rates run from $77 for a standard room to $137 for a deluxe oceanfront room. For retired Department of Defense civilians, the range is $96 to $181.

Room-Filling Events

Periodically throughout the year, convention groups descend on Oahu and special events flood the island. In 2006, for example, 10,700 lawyers flew in for the American Bar Association annual meeting; later that year, the Honolulu Marathon brought a whopping 20,000 fit folks to the island. For upcoming events—and consequent times of year to avoid—check the websites of the **Hawaii Visitors & Convention Bureau** (www.hvcb.org) and the **Hawaii Convention Center** (www.hawaiiconvention.com).

outside. Also in the hotel is the always-popular Shorebird restaurant, where locals on a budget go to grill their own steaks. Kids age 5 to 10 get a free Island Explorer Kit—a backpack filled with sunglasses, a pen, binoculars, a *Reef Adventure Guide* (written by Dr. Richard Murphy of the Ocean Futures Society, founded by Jean-Michel Cousteau), and a *Let's Explore Hawaii Guide,* developed by the University of Hawaii. If you're tired of looking at other sunburned Middle Americans, you can go next door to the Halekulani, where the rich and famous stay, and sip cocktails while taking in some hula and Hawaiian music.

$$$–$$$$ Next door to the Outrigger Reef is **Outrigger Waikiki Shore** (2161 Kalia Rd.; ☎ 800/688-7444 or 808/923-3111; www.outrigger.com), the only condo right on Waikiki Beach. The studios and one- and two-bedroom units are all a little different but basically have a light, airy resort feel with a tile floor, a pull-out sofa, washer and dryer, and a grand view out on the Ewa side of the island. One-bedrooms have an accordion door to form the bedroom, and two-bedrooms can sleep up to six, so this is an ideal place for large families (the master bathroom is a huge bathroom/dressing room combo). At first glance it might seem pricey, but it can actually be more economical than renting two or three hotel rooms, plus you can eat in—studios have clean kitchenettes and larger accommodations have full kitchens. (Again, with Outrigger's best-price-available online booking, for May 2006 a studio that's regularly $245 was listed for $199.) You get the benefits of apartment living with the services of a hotel. Guests can use all the facilities and participate in the programs at the Outrigger Reef. And the beach is right outside your balcony.

$$$–$$$$ You get glamour for grown-ups at **Waikiki Parc** (2233 Helumoa Rd.; ☎ 800/422-0450 or 808/921-7272; www.waikikiparc.com). The more affordable sister to the Halekulani across the street, the Waikiki Parc is a sleek boutique operation. Rack rates are $229 for a standard room to $339 for a deluxe ocean-view room, but if you book online, you'll get the best rate at the time, which can be as low as $175 for a standard room. White shutters cast sexy slatted shadows on the cool tile floor; big firm beds are covered with smooth ivory bedspreads. You can relax on the beach across the street or go to the eighth floor to lounge by the rooftop pool. In the hotel is **Kacho,** one of the city's best Japanese restaurants. And the price includes a full American-buffet or Japanese breakfast.

NEAR THE ALA MOANA SHOPPING CENTER

$–$$ Mike Daley, godfather of Oahu's polo scene, owns the funky, fun **Hawaii Polo Inn & Tower** (1696 Ala Moana Blvd.; ☎ 800/669-7719 or 808/949-0061; www.hawaiipolo.com), which explains the polo-tournament trophies and other horsey memorabilia in its rooms. Located between Ala Moana Shopping Center and the beginning of Waikiki, guests have to walk to prime beaches (about 15 min.) and shopping (about 10 min.). But that minor inconvenience is partially why prices are so reasonable—from $89 for a standard room to $122 for a studio suite if you book online (rack rates are $109–$145). The rooms in the main hotel are a little worn but tropically done up with rattan furniture. The "tower" is actually the adjacent Aqua Marina Hotel, in which the Polo Inn retains its newly renovated suites, which are much nicer than the inn rooms. Sleek with koa furniture and kitchenettes, they make a nice getaway for a couple. This place is popular with neighbor islanders in town for sports events such as the Honolulu Marathon and who aren't looking for frills (service is on the lackadaisical side).

MANOA

Cool, green Manoa Valley is one of Honolulu's most sought-after neighborhoods. Staying here gives visitors a taste of real residential life, away from the coast (I don't know anyone who lives in a beachfront home). Good bus lines make the rest of the city easily accessible.

$ Right near the University of Hawaii, and run by the venerable Thelma Akau (her husband started the hostel, Oahu's first, in 1969), **Hostelling International Honolulu** ✭ (2323A Seaview Ave.; ☎ 808/946-0591; www.hostelsaloha.com) is a pretty genteel enclave as far as hostels go. Its lanai is filled with native plants and its library houses travel and reference books. It gets adult academic types in addition to the usual collection of international backpackers and college kids. Ultraclean, the hostel has two men's dormitories, three women's dormitories (both have bunk beds with thin mattresses), a "couple's room," and a communal kitchen. No private bathrooms. Situated in a quiet residential neighborhood, this hostel is the best choice for adults. Right near the bus stop, there are frequent buses to Waikiki and Ala Moana Center. It's also a few bucks cheaper than the Waikiki branch, with dorm rooms going for $19 a night ($16 for members) and the private room priced at $48 for two people ($42 for members).

$–$$$ If your idea of a B&B is one of those historic converted homes in New England, you'll love the **Manoa Valley Inn** ✭ (2001 Vancouver Dr.; ☎ 808/947-6019;

Avoid the Chains

A big trend in Hawaii is buying local—to keep dollars on the island, instead of sending them to corporate headquarters on the mainland. So while there are Hyatts and Marriotts on Oahu, I encourage people to patronize locally owned hotels, such as the Queen Kapiolani, owned by developer Bert Kobayashi, and the Ohana and Outrigger hotels, chains owned by the local Kelley family.

www.manoavalleyinn.com; payment due 30 days prior to arrival). Built as a residence in 1912 by Milton Moore and converted in 1978 to a B&B by T-shirt mogul Rick Ralston (he saved it from demolition), the Victorian Manoa Valley Inn is now owned by 18-year B&B veteran Theresa Wery, who has an eye for antiques (think handsome English four-poster mahogany beds and floral wallpaper). Right near the University of Hawaii, it's in one of Honolulu's most coveted residential neighborhoods. Of the eight rooms, especially pleasant is the light-filled sunroom, with lots of windows looking out on the garden and beyond to Waikiki. Rates are $99 to $120 for a double with a shared bathroom, $140 to $199 for a double with a private bathroom, and $150 for the small but charming stand-alone cottage that sleeps two. The pool is off-limits to guests. Staying here is a more independent experience than at most B&Bs: Guests help themselves to a continental breakfast on the big veranda and can come and go as they please with their own sets of keys. Super-tranquil, Wery calls this inn "a healing place," and I agree with her apt appraisal.

EASTERN OAHU

East of Honolulu you'll find the suburban enclave of Hawaii Kai (with no hotels, many would say the only reason to come here is to eat at the Hawaii Regional Cuisine restaurant Roy's) and bucolic Waimanalo, 15 minutes beyond Hawaii Kai on Kalanianaole Highway. The latter is a quiet little enclave that's home to lots of Hawaiians, plant nurseries, farms, and a polo field. Houses line the beach, and investors have turned many of them into profitable vacation rentals. Although there are only a few sundry stores like 7-Eleven, and it can take a while to get into town by bus, the long white-sand beach is a big draw. If urban Honolulu isn't your scene, Waimanalo can be the perfect spot.

$ Hawaii Kai wouldn't be my first choice as a base on Oahu—it's a sea-of-houses suburb that's part of Honolulu but inconveniently located off the always crowded Kalanianaole Highway (in rush hour it can take 40 min. to drive into the heart of the city). But **J & B's Haven** ★ (831 Kahena St.; ☎ 808/396-9462; home.hawaii.rr.com/jnbshaven), run by a British mother-and-daughter team Barbara and Joan Webb, is an exception. Set in Hahaione Valley, one of greener parts of the area, this place offers two of the most sleek and sophisticated B&B rooms on the island. Half of the corner King Room ($85) is floor-to-ceiling windows; plus, the room has a wraparound lanai, a comfy king-size bed, and a microwave oven. The Queen Room ($75) is a little smaller and has no oven. The best thing about being in Hawaii Kai is its proximity to snorkel haven Hanauma Bay, Makapuu Beach, and Roy's Restaurant. But don't expect to be able to walk to the beach—Hanauma Bay is the closest swimmable sea, and it's a 10-minute uphill drive away.

$$–$$$$ If you dream about what it's like to actually live in rural Hawaii, rent from **Beach House Hawaii** ★★ Kids (☎ 866/625-6946 or 808/259-7792; www.beachhousehawaii.com), which has 13 properties in Waimanalo. If you're just a couple, this can be a pricey option, but the bigger the group, the bigger the savings. For example, the Mountain View home is $220, and if you have the maximum four people, that comes out to only $55 a night. Last-minute bookings can also yield a discount. Young couple Ana Ziegner and Kini Murray own three of the beautiful homes and manage the rest for other people. Here are descriptions of some of the accommodations, which are all stocked with ocean toys such as body boards and snorkel gear.

Across the street from Waimanalo Beach, **Tradewinds** is a gated six-bedroom, five-bathroom house with everything you need, from a Weber grill on the patio to an iMac with DSL service to a brand-spanking-new washer and dryer—there's even a roll of plastic wrap in a kitchen drawer. The yard is filled with fragrant plumeria trees, bougainvillea, and rose bushes. The spacious tiled living room has rattan furniture. You can rent the whole house for $600 a night (or $3,780 a week) or just the two-story guest house (sleeps four) for $220 a night. A suite in the back of the house has a private entrance, and it can be rented for $185.

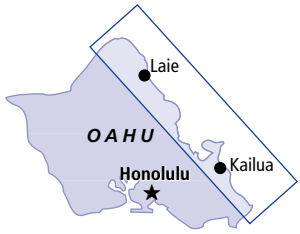
The **Ocean View** is a supercute green-and-white wood four-bedroom house with a babbling koi pond surrounded by a green picket fence. Outfitted with Indonesian teak and elephant-bamboo furniture, the property has a languid island feel. It goes for $585 a night and sleeps eight. In back, the two-bedroom Ohana House has two luxurious king-size beds and costs $1,665 for a 7-night stay, which includes tax and the cleaning fee; divided by four, that comes out to $59 per person per night.

THE WINDWARD SIDE: KAILUA & LANIKAI

Once a bedroom community to Honolulu, which was largely populated by military families, Kailua is now a thriving town in its own right. Just a 15-minute drive away from Honolulu, over the Pali Highway, this area offers a slow pace and a great beach. Adjacent to Kailua, Lanikai is one of Oahu's most exclusive neighborhoods (Don Ho's compound is here, and Michelle Pfeiffer had a house in the area for 5 years). Multimillion-dollar homes line the white sands on what is arguably one of the island's most beautiful beaches, with calm aquamarine waters full of sea turtles (but there are no public showers or restrooms).

$ From the street, **Sharon's Kailua Serenity Bed & Breakfast** ✰ (127 Kakahiaka St., Kailua; ☎ 800/914-2271 or 808/262-5621; www.sharonsserenity.com) looks like all the other unremarkable one-story ranch-style houses lining the quiet block. But inside, it's an oasis with a grand terrace and pool overlooking a canal where you might see paddlers skim by in an outrigger canoe. Cheerful hostess Sharon Price runs a professional operation with three homey rooms (all with their own bathroom), one big enough to hold a family of four for just $90 a night (although that price is for two, add $20 for each additional person). Have your continental breakfast poolside. And Price is proud to point out that there are no additional cleaning fees, as is the case with many B&Bs. Kailua Beach is a 10-minute walk away. Children under 8 not allowed.

$ Gracious and warm retired couple Jim and Marilyn Warman run **Paradise Palms Bed and Breakfast** (804 Mokapu Rd., Kailua; ☎ 808/254-4234; www.paradisepalmshawaii.com), the epitome of cozy. The two guest suites ($85 and $95) have kitchenettes, private entrances, and plant-filled lanais. There's a 3-night minimum, but no extra charges like a cleaning fee. The house, with a big garden lush with bougainvillea, sits along a canal in the quiet suburb of Kailua, within walking distance of the beach of the same name. The Warmans stock the kitchenettes with 3 days' worth of baked goods, fruit, and juice. The beach is a short walk away and the rooms have beach chairs, towels, mats, and coolers that you can use. A $200 deposit is required, and you pay the balance in full in cash or traveler's checks upon arrival. ***Note:*** Credit cards are not accepted.



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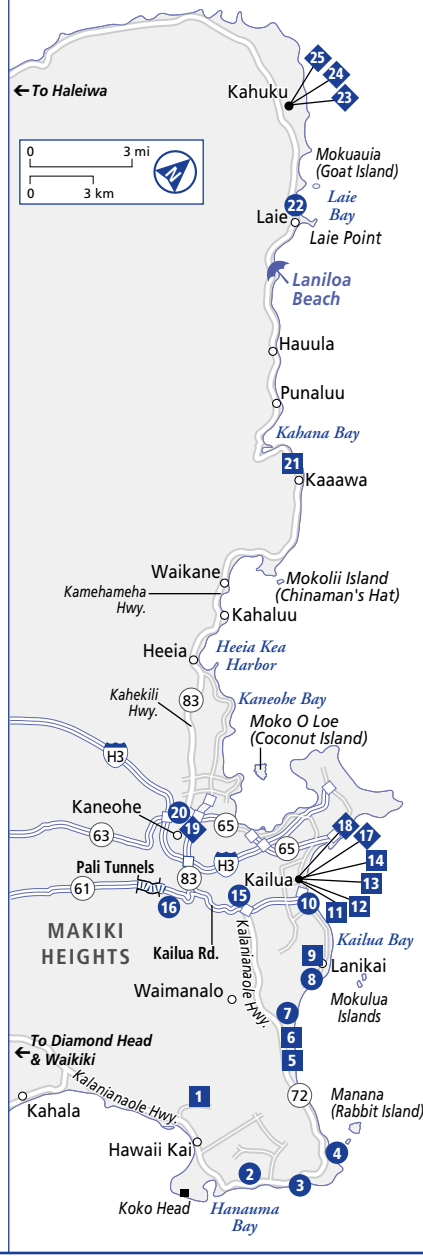

$ For a tranquil, adult stay, **Manu Mele Bed and Breakfast** (153 Kailuna Place, Kailua; ☎ 808/262-0016; www.pixi.com/~manumele) is a good B&B option. The two private-entrance rooms ($80 and $90) are clean, white-tiled, and have a mishmash of furnishings (as well as a two-person max; you can't add kids on a rollaway). The beach is a short walk down a sandy path, and the one-story home also has a lovely patio and pool. You pay in full upon arrival—cash or traveler's checks only. You get breakfast on your first morning there, but you're on your own after that. ***Note:*** Credit cards are not accepted.

$–$$ A 2-minute walk from Kailua Beach is **Beach Lane B&B** ★ kids (111 Hekili St.; ☎ 808/262-8286; www.beachlane.com), run by Tonic Bille, who speaks English, German, Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian. With her European sensibility, Beach Lane's rooms are more sleek and spare than Kailua's other B&Bs. You can choose from two-bedroom suites (you can see the beach when you're lying down on the queen-size beds) and an airy studio that has a private entrance and kitchenette. The two rooms are $95 each, with continental breakfast included. The studio goes for $95 to $125 (without breakfast). Bille has stocked the place with beach mats and chairs, towels, body boards, and ice coolers for guests to use. There's a $40 cleaning fee. ***Note:*** Credit cards are not accepted.

$$$–$$$$ **Hale Lani** ★ kids (1006 Koohoo Place, Lanikai; ☎ 808/226-0028; www.greatrentals.com/HI/20361.html) is a one-bedroom, one-bathroom house that sleeps four. The owners live on the property and also run a day spa here. Stylishly outfitted with overstuffed couches and streamlined kitchen, and just 2 blocks from the beach, this is an ideal place for a small family. Prices run from $195 to $215 depending on the time of year (Jan–Mar is the cheapest).

OAHU'S WEST SIDE

The Waianae Coast has always been the "other side" of the island, one not highlighted in guidebooks and not recommended to tourists. But the main reason visitors didn't spend time out there is that there were no accommodations. That changed with the arrival of Oahu's biggest resort in 1993: **J.W. Marriott Ihilani Resort and Spa at Ko Olina** (Ko Olina Resort, 92-1001 Olani Street, Kapolei ☎ 808/679-0079 or 800/228-9290; www.ihilani.com; $$$–$$$$). The Ihilani's pricey, but now tourists in search of an "old Hawaii" (read: no big buildings) come to this area, despite its remote nature. This part of the island is where you can find one of my favorite treks, the beach that was the site of the world's first international surfing contest and world-class golf.

$$–$$$$ For an affordable golf getaway—or just some old-school resort living, **Makaha Golf Club Resort and Hotel** (84–626 Makaha Valley Road; ☎ 808/695-9544 or 866/576-6447; www.makaharesort.net) is a good option. Built in 1969 by pioneering local developer Chinn Ho (yes, the character on Hawaii Five 0 was named after him), this spread, 45 miles from Honolulu, is worn around the edges, but after years of limping along (it actually closed in 1995 then reopened in 2001 when it was bought by Canada-based Fairmont Resorts), it had its best year in decades in 2005 due to partnerships with Internet travel wholesalers, fully booked Waikiki hotels, and reasonable rates. Rack rates are $205 for a standard room to $550 for a two-bedroom with kitchen. But online booking outfits such as Expedia, offer a standard room for

Campgrounds

Camping on Oahu means slim pickings—there are no national parks with campgrounds, but there are state and county options. It has to be said that camping on Oahu can be a bit dodgy. Friends of mine won't even park their cars at hiking trail heads for fear that their cars will be broken into. And tourists may encounter some hostility from local campers, or they could find themselves neighbors to a family filled with aloha and have an amazing time. A thorough listing of campsites can be found at **www.alternative-hawaii.com.** Here are the best (and safest) options:

The best and most popular campsite is **Malaekahana State Park** (off Kamehameha Hwy., ½ mile north of Laie; $5/campsite/night) on the North Shore. On a secluded bay that has little waves for beginner surfers, the campsite is shrouded in ironwood trees. It's usually windy here, but the campsite nooks are protected. Choose from the state campsite or an adjacent gated campsite run by the nonprofit **Friends of Malaekahana** (P.O. Box 305, Laie, HI 96762; ☎ 808/293-1736; www.alternative-hawaii.com/fom/index.html; $5/person/night)—this area is gated and has a security guard, making it the safest campsite on the island. Each site has a picnic table and fire pit, and there are toilet facilities and hot outdoor showers.

Everyone who grew up here has memories of camping at **Bellows Field Beach Park** (41–043 Kalanianaole Hwy.; free) in Waimanalo. On a 3½-mile-long stretch of white-sand beach lined with ironwood trees, Bellows draws families year-round. It's not exactly secluded—there are 50 campsites at this City & County–run park, and it can get busy. There are bathrooms, outdoor cold showers, and a lifeguard on duty. On windy days, the relentless shore break is good for bodysurfing; on calm days, it's perfect for long swims.

Just down the beach from Bellows is more of the same at the county-run **Waimanalo Bay Recreation Area** (41–043 Aloiloi St., off Kalanianaole Hwy.; free). With only 10 campsites, you'll feel slightly more isolated here, but there's a bathroom facility, lifeguard, picnic tables, and night security.

For a tranquil, green camping experience, try **Hoomaluhia Botanical Garden** (45–680 Luluku Rd.; ☎ 808/233-7323; free), which offers tent camping on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday only. You'll be amid 400 acres of tropical plants and hiking trails, tucked behind residential Kaneohe. Campsites have bathroom facilities. Permits from the botanical garden are free. At the base of the grand Koolau Mountains, it's often overcast here. This spot is great for plant lovers who don't have to be at the beach every waking minute (since there's no good beach nearby).

$119, and if you stay a week, one night is free, which means it comes out to $99 a night. The area is home to a large percentage of Oahu's native Hawaiians, who are on staff and also are part of a program that brings in artisans and cultural practitioners, so guests can get a real taste of traditional Hawaiian life. Rooms are pleasant, but nothing fancy. The big draw is the par-72 golf course that lies between the towering Waianae Mountain range and the ocean. Golf fee for guests: $80 in the morning, $65 after noon. Makaha Beach is across the road from the entrance to the resort, but it's a long driveway, so a walk takes about 10 minutes.

OAHU'S NORTH SHORE

When locals say "country," they mean the North Shore. My family lived out here in 1969, renting a beach house for $300 a month. Now rents are more like $2,500 a month, and when the winter waves are up, the traffic is bumper-to-bumper, but a rural feel lingers. To get a taste of Surf City, the North Shore is the place to be. Here, vacation rentals are more plentiful than hotel rooms, and during surfing's Triple Crown season—November to January—it's hard to find any kind of room on the North Shore.

$–$$$$ Surfers on a budget (and that's most of them) make a beeline for **Backpackers Vacation Inn and Plantation Village** (kids) (59–788 Kamehameha Hwy.; ☎ 808/638-7838; www.backpackers-hawaii.com). A collection of three big houses (the Beach House, the Main House, and the Brown House) and a cluster of tiny plantation-style cabins, Backpackers offers dorm rooms, private rooms, and studios. You can't beat the location—in the thick of the surf scene—right across from snorkel spot Three Tables Beach, and near Foodland. It's rustic island style, with rattan furniture, marine-life murals, and floral prints. The dorm rooms are really barebones, with thin mattresses on DIY bunk beds. Hostel beds are $22 in the Main House and plantation houses, and $26 in the Beach House. Hostellers who stay a week get the seventh night free. Private rooms for two in the plantation houses and Brown House (with shared bathrooms) are $67 to $85. Studios in the Beach House have kitchenettes or full kitchens, private bathroom, and TV and go for $112 to $135. The private cabins are a good pick for families or large groups. You can get a two-, three-, or four-bedroom cabin for $150 to $250, all of which have full kitchens. If you plan to come in winter for the big waves, book far in advance.

Camping Permits

For City & County of Honolulu (which is all of Oahu) campsites, you must first obtain a (free) permit at the **Department of Parks and Recreation** (650 S. King St.; ☎ 808/523-4525; Mon–Fri 7:45am–4pm). You must apply in person, and each permit covers up to 10 people for a maximum of 5 consecutive nights at any one park.

For state parks, you can apply for permits in writing up to 30 days before the first day of camping, through the **Department of Land and Natural Resources** (P.O. Box 621, Honolulu, HI 96809; in person 1151 Punchbowl St.; ☎ 808/587-0300; www.hawaii.gov/dlnr). Permits are $5 per campsite per night and good for 5 consecutive nights.

$$–$$$$ My condos of choice on the North Shore are the **Ke Iki Beach Bungalows** (66–250 Kamehameha Highway; ☎ 866/638-8229 or 808/638-8229; www.keikibeach.com). Owned by an Oregon family and efficiently run by Gregory Gerstenberger, this is a laid-back compound of bungalows and cottages where you can do your own thing. It's right on the wide, white Ke Iki Beach, just down the sand from Banzai Pipeline, and a 10-minute walk to Foodland (the area's main grocery store) and Starbucks. Don't be surprised if you see the likes of six-time world surfing champ Kelly Slater sitting on the curb sipping a latte and chatting on his cellphone. Sitting on the lanai of the second-story, one-bedroom orchid at night, the sky is a celestial extravaganza of stars. On the beach, you might see a bonfire circled by fishermen as palm fronds rustle in the breeze. The immaculately clean rooms, done up in island style with bamboo furniture, aren't fancy but are equipped with everything you need. Don't feel like cooking? Haleiwa and its restaurants are a 10-minute drive away. In summer the water is lovely for swimming, but in winter the strong currents and waves are for watching only. Ke Iki's rooms cost $120 to $210 per night (take $10 off if you stay a week or more), and rise to $135 to $230 from December 1 to January 6 (peak big-surf season).

DINING FOR ALL TASTES

On Oahu, food is a common topic of conversation, whether it's where to get the best *lomilomi* salmon or who's the hottest up-and-coming chef. And you can eat well here, whether you drop $5 in a shabby Chinatown *pho* (noodle) shop or $150 at nationally recognized Chef Mavro. The key to finding the best food is getting out of Waikiki—if that's where you're staying. In Honolulu, you'll find clusters of good restaurants in Kaimuki, along Kapahulu Avenue (within walking distance of Waikiki), and in Chinatown. Outside of the city, the pickings are slim, but there are a few highlights. Here are enough choices to keep you eating out every night.

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Average entree price: $ = $9 and less; $$ = $10 to $15; $$$ = $16 to $21; $$$$ = $22 and up

WAIKIKI

The state staple is the "plate lunch"—basically local fast food. It's a paper plate of a main dish, two scoops of rice (the sticky Japanese kind), and a scoop of macaroni salad. The main dish can be a range of food that reflects Hawaii's cultural mix: Korean barbecued ribs, Japanese chicken katsu (a breaded, fried, and sliced breast), quasi-American hamburger steak (a patty smothered in gravy), or Chinese-influenced sweet-and-sour spareribs. Plate lunches are satisfying the way Southern food is satisfying—comforting and heavy and worth a try, along with the more gourmet fare I also recommend below.

$ You can find plate-lunch spots all over the island—the biggest local chains are Zippy's and L&L Drive-Inn, but I don't recommend them. As the relentless march of development continues, Oahu's old-school local eateries are slowly being lost, but a classic that's been around since 1961 is one I *do* recommend. At the **Rainbow Drive-In** (3308 Kanaina Ave., at Kapahulu Ave.; ☎ 808/7370177), surfers from nearby Waikiki, construction workers, police officers, and bored teenagers all converge for teriyaki beef plates, barbecued-pork sandwiches, and the famous chili, which is made fresh every morning (though from canned ingredients), all costing under $4. Order at one of the two windows, grab a table on the outdoor lanai, and wait until your food appears on the counter.

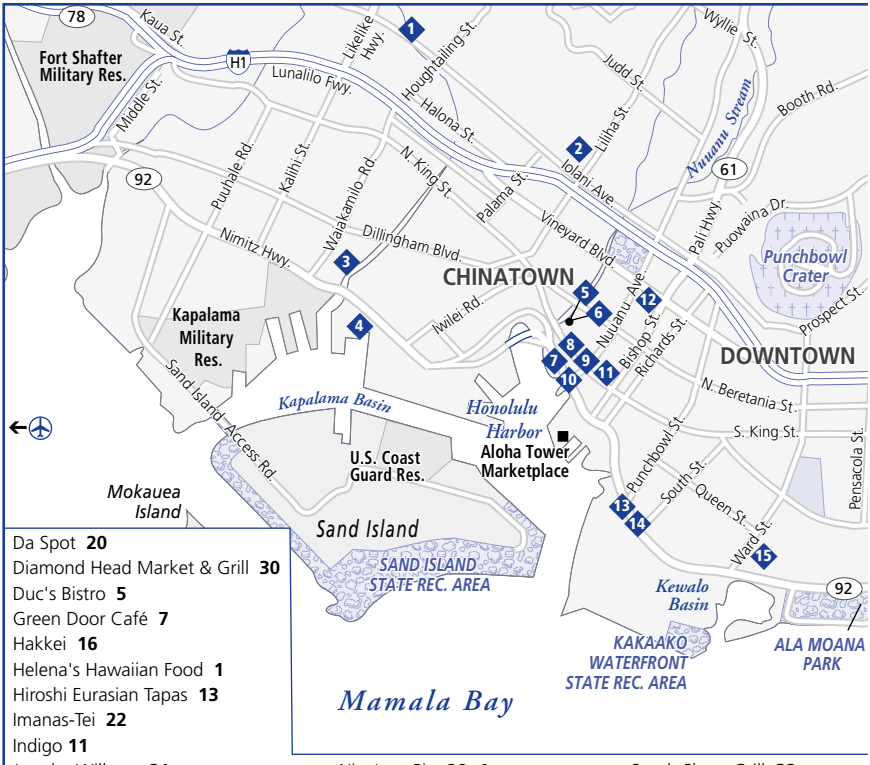
$ Over the past couple of years, some chefs and entrepreneurs have reinvented the plate lunch, using fresh ingredients and updated recipes. The two best examples are **Kakaako Kitchen** (Ward Centre, 1200 Ala Moana Blvd.; ☎ 808/596-7488), the casual brainchild of star chef Russell Siu (his upscale spot is 3660 on the Rise in Kaimuki), and **Diamond Head Market & Grill** ★ (3158 Monsarrat Ave.; ☎ 808/732-0077), Hawaii's closest thing to Dean & DeLuca.

At **Kakaako Kitchen,** you can get plate lunches that range from crab sandwiches to chicken curry, and none of them cost more than $9.50. Better, instead of scoops of white rice, you can have brown rice or a green salad. You order at the counter, the server gives you a number that you place on your table outside, and your Styrofoam box of food is delivered when it's ready. **Diamond Head Market & Grill** is a gourmet store with prepared food and a takeout plate-lunch counter. Enterprising owner Kelvin Ro sells dishes like refreshing jicama salad and roasted rack of lamb, deluxe bento boxes, and his famous scones, along with condiments such as mint-ginger sauce from his cousin Glenn Chu's Heaven & Earth line (Chu is the chef-owner of Indigo). The condiments make great gifts for foodies back home. At the "grill," you can buy fresh-grilled mahimahi with salad for $7. It's a favorite stop for surfers after a day of riding the waves at Diamond Head.

CHINATOWN

$ Like all Chinatowns, Honolulu's version is a food mecca. It's the place to buy great produce at bargain prices, find sashimi-grade fish at Oahu Market, and, of course, eat well. Of the many dim sum spots in the area, the best two are in the Chinese Cultural Plaza. The undisputed dim sum king is **Legend Seafood** ★★★ (Chinese Cultural Plaza, 100 Beretania St., at River St.; ☎ 808/532-1868), a classic, big, open dining hall with white tablecloths and all the familiar dumplings.

Where to Dine in Waikiki



Da Spot **20**
Diamond Head Market & Grill **30**
Duc's Bistro **5**
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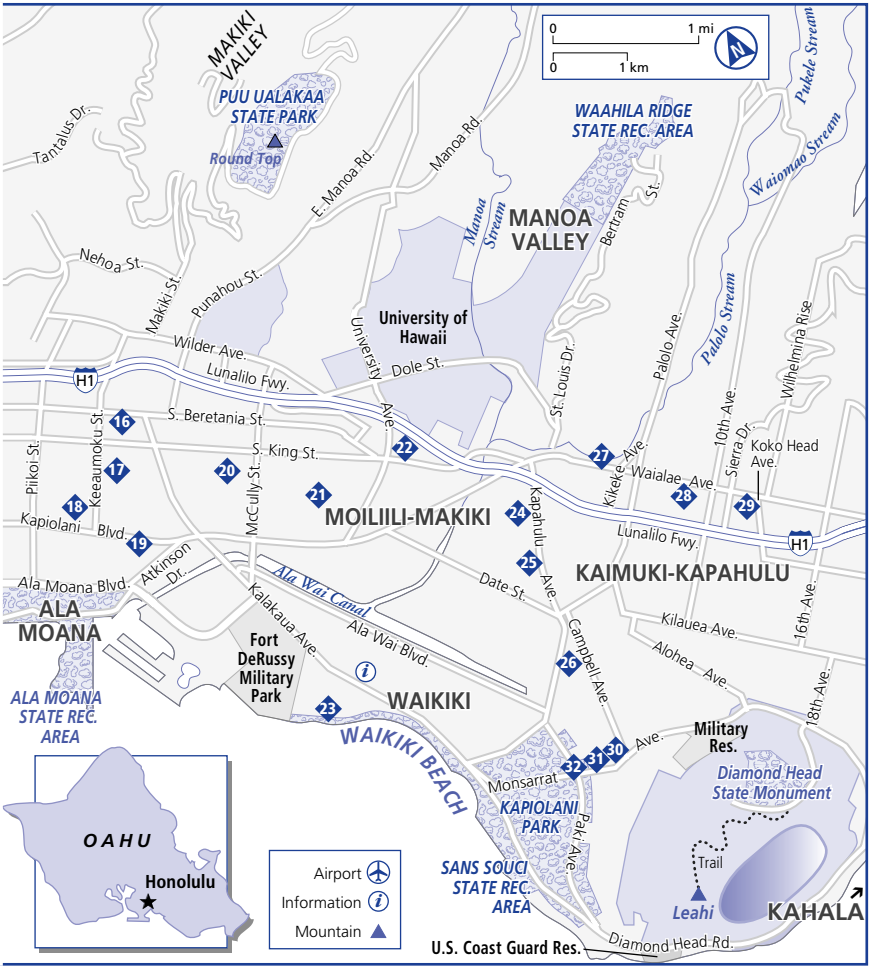
What sets Legend apart is the quality—the dumpling dough is just a little thinner and more delicate, the fresh ingredients pop with flavor. From 10:30am to 2pm, you can flag down carts serving silky *look fun* (extra wide noodles) hiding sweet scallops or beef, crisp mochi balls stuffed with a rich pork filling, and dumplings of spicy scallions and chewy pine nuts. This restaurant is open for dinner, too, serving good, familiar Cantonese food. It also has a vegetarian dim sum sister next door.

$ At the opposite end of the center, past the herbalists and jewelry shops, is tiny **Tai Pan** (Chinese Cultural Plaza, 100 Beretania St., at River St.; ☎ 808/599-8899), where it's hard to find a seat at noon (you'll likely share a big round table



with a couple of Cantonese-speaking diners) or a server who speaks English. But the good news is that the spot serves dim sum until 4pm. The food is a notch down from Legend's, but everything is a buck or two less (that means $2.50 instead of $3.50 for a plate of three dumplings).

$ This neighborhood is also packed with Vietnamese holes in the wall, and my favorite is **99 Coffee Shop** (174 N. King St.; ☎ 808/537-4276). Besides a steaming bowl of *pho* (soup with meat of your choice and veggies in an intense, five-spice-scented broth), you can get dishes such as "broken rice"—jagged chips of jasmine rice topped with barbecued pork. On a bustling street, 99 Coffee Shop, where most things cost $5 to $7, is a nice place to take a break from exploring Chinatown.

$ Young Frenchman Nicolas Chaize opened his plate-lunch spot, **Nico's at Pier 38** ★ (Pier 38, 1133 N. Nimitz Hwy.; ☎ 808/540-1377; www.nicospier38.com), across a parking lot from the United Fishing Agency—Honolulu's fish auction house. So every day he offers primo island fish that's literally fresh off the boat. You can rub shoulders with fishermen and fish brokers while eating *onaga* (ruby snapper) grilled with a *lilikoi* beurre blanc sauce or calamari salad. Expect top-notch ingredients nicely prepared (Chaize used to work in the kitchen at haute eatery Chef Mavro) at fast-food prices ($7.95 tops). If you're not into seafood, Nico's also serves one of the best burgers in town. Walk around the pier and check out the fishing boats. While Nico's might seem out of the way, it's a 5-minute drive from downtown. Open until 2:30pm Monday to Friday, Nico's only serves dinner on Thursday and Friday, and only until 8pm.

$–$$ Perennial local award-winning **Little Village Noodle House** (1133 Smith St.; ☎ 808/545-3008; www.littlevillagehawaii.com) is so popular that last year it expanded into the adjacent building—and there are still lines for dinner after events at nearby Hawaii Theatre and the First Friday gallery walk. Businesspeople, downtown hipsters, and families crowd the restaurant for multiregional Chinese food. Flavors run from mild (steamed catfish in a delicate gingery broth) to pungent (crunchy, sweet-and-spicy pan-fried beef), and the prices range from $3 to $17.

$–$$ My favorite Chinatown cheap eats are at **Green Door Café** (1145 Maunakea St., entrance on Pauahi St.; ☎ 808/533-0606), where Betty Pang cooks-to-order pungently spiced Malaysian food. The lime green cubbyhole has just a handful of tables and chairs, and dishes are served on Styrofoam plates. The big flavors and small prices keep a core of addicted fans coming back. Order some freshly made *roti* (crepelike flat bread) and dip it in the creamy chicken curry. If you're familiar with the cuisine and your favorite isn't on the handwritten menu, Betty just might make it for you anyway.

$–$$ A newer entry in the Chinatown dining scene are Thai restaurants. Of these, I like **Sweet Basil** (1152A Maunakea St.; ☎ 808/545-5800) best for its excellent curries—don't miss the short ribs in a thick, rich massaman curry sauce. You don't even need a knife for this long-simmered meat. Office drones beeline for the $8.95 all-you-can-eat buffet, which is good, but the a la carte, cooked-to-order food is better. ***Note:*** Sweet Basil is open only for lunch—it closes at 2pm.

$$–$$$$ Not all the restaurants in Chinatown are low-rent: You'll get a touch of old-Saigon elegance at **Duc's Bistro** ★ (1188 Maunakea St.; ☎ 808/531-6325), where the immaculately prepared menu is a mix of Vietnamese (rice noodles topped with lemon-grass prawns) and French (steak aux poivre). Lunch runs about $15, but prices increase dramatically on the dinner menu, with entrees running from $15 (for pasta) to $33 (for rack of lamb). Local movers and shakers gather at the bar for *pau hana* (postwork) drinks.

$$$–$$$$ Chinatown is Honolulu's nightlife hot spot, with clubs such as thirtyninehotel and NextDoor bringing in international DJs, and the restaurant that pioneered the scene is **Indigo** ★ (1121 Nuuanu Ave.; ☎ 808/521-2900). In an old brick building, this Eurasian eatery is a warren of rooms and multiple bars

filled with Asian antiques. The place has one of the best lunch buffets in town—lots of vegetable dishes along with fish, chicken, and steak—for $15. Well-spiced dishes, such as beef rendang and duck glazed in a raspberry-hoisin sauce, run from $19 to $30 and feed the dinner crowd. Late at night the place morphs into a nightclub. Indigo also hosts a weekly Tuesday-night sit-down wine tasting called the Wrath of Grapes. For $20, you'll taste a slew of wines and sample some of Chef Glenn Chu's appetizers. Limited to 28 people, reservations are a must. The event is a great way to meet locals.

DIAMOND HEAD

$ When I don't feel like cooking, I automatically head to **Da Spot** (908 Pumehana St., between Waiola and Algaroba sts.; ☎ 808/941-1313). It's a grubby storefront in the residential neighborhood known as Moiliili, and you won't find it in any other guidebooks. One of my favorite eateries, I know I am going to get deeply satisfying home cooking here and a lot of aloha from owners Ahmad Ramadan and Ako Kifuji. They make some of the best smoothies in town (21 different types), but it's their daily specials—such as Egyptian chicken heady with cardamom and cinnamon and a rich, red stew of lamb and vegetables—that keep me coming back. The food is a reflection of Ramadan's Egyptian heritage: "I can't cook Japanese food," admits Kifuji with a shrug. You might end up playing with one of the couple's two young children while you wait for your food, which arrives in Styrofoam boxes along with rice and salad, all for $7. I like to take my dinner over to the park bench at the school kitty-corner to Da Spot.

$–$$ A spate of Mexican *taquerias* opened on Oahu in the past couple years, and **Mi Casa** (3046 Monsarrat Ave.; ☎808/737-1562), at the foot of Diamond Head, is the best. What makes it stand out is the fact that Spokane transplant Angelica Selvidge (who's originally from Jalisco, Mexico) makes her own corn-flour tortillas. She shapes them thick so they won't fall apart when stuffed with carne asada and picadillo, and they're as soft as the wheat version. Her husband, Ken, makes the best carnitas on the island—he cooks the pork in a skillet rather than frying it in lard. (In fact, in a nod to healthy eating, nothing is fried at Mi Casa.) After rendering the meat in its own juices, Selvidge finishes it off in milk and orange juice, leaving it supermoist and with a subtle tang. Combination plates are reasonably priced at $7.95 to $13. You can take a seat in the bustling cafe (the table in front of the window that looks out on Monsarrat St. is the best) or at the sliver of an outdoor deck. Grab some *cerveza* (beer) from the liquor store across the street.

$–$$ Just up the road is *the* place to get fresh mahimahi soft tacos. At **South Shore Grill** (3114 Monsarrat Ave.; ☎ 808/734-0229), Linda Gehring makes everything from scratch. Order your dish as an entree and it comes with an addictive Asian-accented slaw. ***Note:*** Credit cards are not accepted.

DOWNTOWN

$ For a truly local experience, stop in at Honolulu's last old-school diner: **Liliha Bakery & Coffee Shop** (515 Kuakini St.; ☎ 808/531-1651). Known for its sweet Coco Puffs pastries and Chantilly cake, I like to sit at the long Formica counter and order dishes like hamburger steak smothered in gravy along with an orange

freeze (this is one of the last places on the island to serve the old-school soda-fountain favorite) or meatloaf (the Tues special) that cost $6.50. Open 24 hours from Tuesday to Sunday, you can spot people (often local bands and post-club revelers) eating oversize pancakes at 1am before heading home.

$ Ramen is serious business on Oahu, and my favorite spot for it is the first Honolulu branch of a famous Tokyo spot, **Taishoken** ★ (903 Keeaumoku St.; ☎ 808/955-8860). There are only a few seats in the brightly lit white box where the soba noodles are made fresh daily. Sit at the counter and you can watch the cook toiling over a giant steaming pot. Taishoken is notable for inventing its own style of ramen: Tsukemen, which goes for $7 a bowl. You get a plateful of noodles that stay firm because they're not sitting in broth, then you dip them in a bowl of soup—either miso or shoyu. I like the faintly sweet tinge of the miso. ***Big plus:*** Taishoken is open until 10:30pm Monday to Saturday.

$–$$ Hawaii's long-intertwined history with Japan of course means that Japanese cuisine is an integral part of the dining landscape. There's a huge range, from local mom-and-pop saimin shops to a new wave of high-concept contemporary Japanese restaurants opened by *Nihon-jin* (Japanese nationals). For local Japanese food, I head to **Mr. Ojisan Restaurant** ★ (Kilohana Sq., 1018 Kapahulu Ave.; ☎ 808/735-4455), where you can get everything from little *izakaya* (Japanese pub) dishes—such as grilled eggplant and vinegary seafood salad—to big bowls of steaming ramen, to sushi, to complete dinners of pork katsu and unagi. Most dishes are under $10. Rows of shochu and sake bottles emblazoned with regular customers' names line one counter. The clean, spare room and crisply presented food attract the likes of star chef Alan Wong.

$$ Newer, style-conscious spots attract a youthful party crowd. For reliable food in a rock-star setting (Tokyo design star Yasumichi Morita, who did Manhattan hot spot Megu, redid this former cavernous bank space), I head to **Shokudo** ★ (Ala Moana Pacific Center, ground floor, 1585 Kapiolani Blvd.; ☎ 808/941-3701; www.shokudojapanese.com). Fresh tofu comes out of the kitchen hourly. It's served plain, in a straw bowl, and the silky globs that you top with salt, green onions, nori, and some dashi have made me rethink soybean curd. If you prefer, you can order it fried in a slightly sweet soy sauce. Hybrid dishes like sukiyaki topped with mashed potatoes (imagine Japanese shepherd's pie) and mochi gratin sound wacky but taste good. Effervescent vodka soda cocktails (honey lemon is my soothing favorite) keep the buzzing crowd lubricated. While most dishes are under $10, you eat them family-style, and as your group keeps ordering, the bill can add up.

$–$$$ Since I can't afford to eat at the better-known Japanese eateries, my sushi joint of choice is **Imanas-Tei** ★★ (2626 S. King St.; ☎ 808/941-2626). Near the University of Hawaii, this Zen bamboo-paneled haven serves high-quality, edo-mae-style sushi—dainty one-bite sizes of nigiri. It's still on the pricey side, but for me, cheap and sushi are two words that don't mix. Imanas-Tei also serves small dishes like delectable braised kabocha squash, the crunchiest fried chicken (drizzled with a slightly sweet soy sauce) this side of the Mississippi, and steaming pots of cook-your-own nabe. Like other izakaya places, individual dishes are cheap—

Fish & Poi

Forget packaged tourist luaus. The food is terrible. For a real taste of Hawaiian food, go to a Hawaiian restaurant.

What is Hawaiian food? If you go back to ancient times, the staples of the healthy Hawaiian diet were poi (taro root pounded to a gooey paste), mashed taro root, sweet potatoes, fish (raw and cooked), and pork. Salt and mashed kukui nuts were the only seasoning. Dr. Terry Shintani did a study of the traditional Hawaiian diet, which is high in carbohydrates and low in fats, and came up with *The Hawaii Diet* (Atria, $13). Working in the impoverished Hawaiian community in Waianae, on Oahu's west coast, Shintani saw a weight loss of about 11 pounds in obese native Hawaiians who followed the diet for 21 days.

Today, what is called Hawaiian food is an amalgam of traditional food, with Western and Asian influences—seen in dishes like *lomilomi* salmon (cerviche-style fish dish with a tomato-and-onion salad) and chicken long rice, made with Chinese noodles and ginger. But the centerpiece is still poi, kalua pig (a whole animal traditionally steamed in an *imu*, or pit), steamed sweet potato, and laulau (pork and fish wrapped in young taro leaves, then steamed).

nothing costs more than $13—but they add up. Japanese nationals and locals flock to this place, so expect a wait on the bench outside—the restaurant doesn't take reservations after 7pm.

$$ Another style-conscious spot is **Kai** (1427 Makaloa St.; ☎ 808/944-1555), specializing in the Japanese street food *okonomiyaki*, a sort of pancake topped with things like squid, pork, and kimchi. You can also get small dishes like daikon long-braised in dashi and a simple, delicious salad of mizuna and egg. Kai is right near Ala Moana Shopping Center.

$$$$ Opened in January 2006, **Hakkei** ★★ (1436 Young St., between Kalakaua Ave. and Keeaumoku St.; ☎ 808/944-6688; www.hakkei-honolulu.com) is the offshoot of a well-known hot-spring inn in Japan known for its kaiseki cuisine. Hakkei shares its mother ship's chef, Seiya Masahara. You may have seen him beat Masaharu Morimoto on the Food Network's *Iron Chef*. Instead of haute kaiseki cuisine, Hakkei's specialty is the Japanese comfort food known as oden, a hotpot of *dashi* (broth) dotted with long-simmered vegetables and goodies such as sweet potato wrapped in cabbage leaves. You can go either for a "set" three-course dinner (the $35 option that includes oden is a good way to sample Masahara's food) or order lots of little dishes a la carte.

$$ Oahu has a handful of Hawaiian restaurants—most of them run by Japanese or Chinese families—and they all have their specialties, but dingy **Ono Hawaiian Foods** ★ (726 Kapahulu Ave.; ☎ 808/737-2275), established more than 4

decades ago, is consistently the all-around best—which is why there's always a line. Inside, weathered photos of local and national celebrities who have eaten here coat the walls. It's rare that an institution keeps up its quality over nearly half a century, but Ono does. The poi is fresh and thick, the laulau giant and tasty. This place is also the most Hawaiian—serving dishes such as *naau puaa* (stewed pork intestines) and *opihi* (raw indigenous limpets found only in Hawaii waters).

Your best bet is to order one of the "special plates"—a-little-bit-of-everything meals that run from $9.50 to $13. Everything arrives in plastic dishes that look like they're from an elementary school cafeteria circa 1972. Use the poi as a condiment to cut the saltiness of the kalua pig.

$$ The best of the rest: **Helena's Hawaiian Food** (1240 N. School St., Kalihi; ☎ 808/845-8044); **People's Café** (1300 Pali Hwy., downtown; ☎ 808/536-5789); and **Young's Fish Market** (City Square Shopping Center, 1286 Kalani St., Kalihi; ☎ 808/841-4885).

KAIMUKI

$$–$$$$ The neighborhood of Kaimuki is emerging as a restaurant hub, and two casual spots have pushed Honolulu's midpriced dining envelope. In 2004, caterer Kevin Hanney opened his contemporary American bistro **12th Avenue Grill** ★★ (1145 12th Ave.; ☎ 808/732-9469; www.restauranteur.com/12thavenue) to rave reviews. Although places like this are plentiful in cities like New York and San Francisco, Honolulu hadn't seen anything like it—spare decor, wood booths, images by local photographers on the walls, and pared down American food done well. I'm talking brined pork chop with apple chutney for $19, and a $7.95 niçoise salad made with Hanney's singular ahi spread (you can buy tubs of it to go for $7—and you'll want to).

$$–$$$$ Following on the heels of 12th Avenue Grill is **Town** ★★ (3435 Waialae Ave., Kaimuki; ☎ 808/735-5900), chef-owner Ed Kenney's sleek, low-key enclave of Mediterranean-leaning food, made with as many naturally grown local ingredients as he can get his hands on. The menu changes daily, but some rotating highlights include mussels and cavatelli in a citrusy Cinzano-spiked broth and

Late-Night Eats

Oahu eats early. Most restaurants stop serving dinner at 9:30pm. It used to be that the only place you could get a midnight snack was at the fast-food chain Zippy's. But that's slowly changing. Here are a few spots that keep night-owl hours:

- **Imanas-Tei:** Monday to Saturday until 11:30pm (p. 128)
- **Mr. Ojisan:** Monday to Thursday until 11:30pm, Friday and Saturday until 1am (p. 128)
- **Shokudo:** Daily until 2am (p. 128)
- **Vino:** Friday and Saturday until 11pm (p. 131)

brined, flattened chicken with bits of torn bread, roasted grapes, and crunchy pancetta. Kenney also reinvents local dishes such as oxtail soup, presenting fall-off-the-bone oxtail smeared with a cilantro-ginger pesto atop creamy risotto dotted with boiled peanuts (a favorite Hawaii snack) for $18.

$$–$$$ **Ninniku Ya** (3196 Waialae Ave.; ☎ 808/735-0784), also known as the Garlic Restaurant, is an offbeat option—the cozy restaurant is in an old Craftsman bungalow, and inside is a warm woody glow that matches the simple, affordable food (around $16 for an entree), all flavored with garlic by chef-owner Eiyuki Endo. New York steak and tiger prawns cooked with the stinking rose are perfect dishes.

$–$$ Next door to the pricier Hiroshi Eurasian Tapas (below) is Hiroshi's sister restaurant, **Vino** ★★ (☎ 808/533-4476), the brainchild of Chuck Furuya, one of only two master sommeliers in Hawaii. Furuya, who's usually in the house, is an Italophile and wine freak who's constantly combing the globe for his latest finds, and he wants to share his knowledge with his customers. He has all kinds of programs, from bringing in famous winemakers such as Roger Dagorn for tastings with patrons to holding his monthly $30 "Chuck's Table" communal dinners for 12—he opens a bottle for each of the three courses and talks wine (he's also a great source for Honolulu restaurant stories; he's pals with all the top chefs). With more than 20 wines by the glass and more than 60 by the bottle, Vino has become the oenophile hangout, and you can get exquisite small plates of Italian cuisine, from baby asparagus topped with a quail egg to sage-butter gnocchi, both costing just $6.95.

$$$–$$$$ If you happen to be on Oahu during an occasion that calls for a celebratory brunch, go to **Orchids** ★ (2199 Kalia Rd., Halekulani; ☎ 808/367-2343; www.halekulani.com/orchids), where the $40 stunning Sunday buffet runs from 9:30am to 2:30pm. It's a Roman orgy of stations, all laden with top-notch fresh ingredients. The problem is deciding what to choose. Orchids, in the upscale Halekulani hotel at the western edge of Waikiki, is also a pricey seafood restaurant at lunch and dinner, serving well-done dishes like steamed onaga (ruby snapper) sizzled with sesame oil and topped with ginger and cilantro. The beachfront setting, beneath a giant hau tree, is a perfect holiday backdrop.

$$–$$$ At **Hiroshi Eurasion Tapas** ★★★ (Restaurant Row, 500 Ala Moana Blvd.; ☎ 808/524-8466; www.hiroshihawaii.com), the focus is on chef Hiroshi Fukui's legerdemain—he effortlessly combines French technique with Pacific and Asian ingredients, and plays with culinary idioms, making upscale versions of Japanese comfort foods. Order a bunch of small plates, and a couple of big ones, and share. A signature dish: the $9.50 kampachi carpaccio perfectly balanced with a generous topping of finely diced ginger, tomato, artisanal tofu, and cilantro.

$$$$ One of Honolulu's best-kept fine-dining secrets is sequestered in an old landmark restaurant called **The Willows.** This is where big groups come to load up at a mediocre buffet for subpar Hawaiian food, prime rib, fried shrimp—you get the idea. The Willows is a complex of venues spread out on lush grounds, with koi ponds. There's even a little chapel where people get married. But upstairs, in a dining room that looks like the nook in a convention center, young chef Jay

Matsukawa quietly plies his craft. At **J at the Willows** ✯✯ (The Willows, 901 Hausten St.; ☎ 808/952-5990), he fills a silky-soft oversize ravioli with tiny bits of braised oxtail, spinach, and ricotta cheese and lays it in a deeply beefy broth made earthy with black truffle. Duck breast marries well with a Grand Marnier–butter sauce and comes with a bowl of duck-leg cassoulet made fragrant with Provençal herbs. This place is on the pricey side, with entrees costing $24 to $31, but Matsukawa is one of Honolulu's chefs to watch.

THE WINDWARD SIDE

$–$$ In Kaneohe, **Pah Ke's** (48–018 Kamehameha Hwy.; ☎ 808/235-4505) looks like any other Chinese joint, but owner Raymond Siu makes a lot more than sweet-and-sour pork. Sure, there's the regular Chinese menu, which is good, but Siu has an "other" menu, which includes tasty fusion-type dishes like spinach salad with a citrusy vinaigrette made with kau oranges (from the Big Island), moo shu tofu with goat cheese and hoisin sauce, and sautéed beef with sweet-and-sour sauce. The price is right, too: Entrees range from $10 to $16.

$$ Inside the sparely stylish **Sushi Kai** ✯ (20 Kainehe St.; ☎ 808/262-5661) are round paper hanging lamps, a two-tone paint job of olive drab and ecru, and a stone floor—all of which set a fashionable tone. The around-$10 small-plate Japanese dishes excel, with chef Jason Roldan tweaking traditional formulas to create things like sake-simmered clams boosted with roasted-garlic slivers and garlic butter. The fish variety on the sushi menu is limited but of good quality. Roldan also makes ambitious full-size entrees that can go up in price to $19, but that's for a delicious and worthwhile macadamia-crusted mahimahi in béarnaise sauce. Honoluluans wish Sushi Kai would open a branch in town.

$$$–$$$$ Kailua isn't exactly known for its food, but when **Lucy's Grill & Bar** (33 Aulike St.; ☎ 808/230-8188) opened in 2001, a reason was born for Honolulu residents to drive over the Pali. Serving what it calls "Euro-local" food, Lucy's Grill & Bar is a TGI Island Bistro, with Hawaiian Regional Cuisine leaning hard toward lots of sweet sauces and oversize portions, which makes it a crowd pleaser—on any given night, this surfboards-on-the-wall place is jammed with Kailua residents. Sugary Mongolian barbecue sauce is slathered on kiawe-grilled baby back ribs; ahi is crusted with pepper and served in a rich beurre blanc sauce. The indoor-outdoor bar is a good place to perch for a passion-fruit margarita and rub elbows with locals. Owner-chef Christian Schneider knows what he's doing—he's the son of Bobbie Lou Schneider, who owns Kailua dining landmark Buzz's Original Steakhouse (which I'm not recommending because I don't go for the teriyaki-steak-and-salad-bar scene).

THE NORTH SHORE

$–$$ For a long time, burgers and burritos were the staples on the North Shore, with everyone stopping in at Haleiwa's well-known **Kua Aina** (1116 Auahi Bay 5; ☎ 808/591-9133) for big mahimahi sandwiches. But in the past couple years, things have changed, with young restaurateurs upping the restaurant options. When **Banzai Sushi** ✯ (North Shore Market Place, 66–246B Kamehameha Hwy.,

Haleiwa; ☎ 808/384-4376) opened in 2004, it quickly became a hot spot (people like seven-time world-champion surfer Kelly Slater eat here). Run by willowy blonde Brazilian import Alessia Ucelli, who was tired of driving into Honolulu three times a week for her sushi fix, Banzai serves decent sushi—you can get a complete dinner for $19—and a really good ceviche dotted with chunks of tomato and laced with cilantro and shishimi pepper, courtesy of the Brazilian chef. The open-air lanai has conventional tables and chairs and low tables at which you sit on cushions. It's great to sit and sip sake while samba and crickets in the night play.

$ At **Paradise Found Café** (66–443 Kamehameha Hwy., Haleiwa; ☎ 808/637-4540), owner-cook Chip Sandt uses locally grown organic ingredients to create tasty, filling, and cheap vegetarian food. Tucked in the back of the supercrunchy Celestial Foods health-food store in an old wood building, Paradise Found serves globally inflected food like a peanut-sauce veggie plate and overstuffed burritos, both of which cost under $8. It's popular with local surfers who like to pop in for the fruity smoothies.

$$ New York transplants Kenny and Peggy Usamanont wanted a change from Manhattan and decided to open **Haleiwa Eats** (66–079 Kamehameha Hwy.; ☎ 808/637-4247) after a vacation to Oahu. Kenny's mother is a Thai-restaurant veteran and he learned all her recipes, including a crunchy, tangy ginger salad, and sweet-and-tart duck slathered in tamarind sauce. At the casual cafe, with white tile floors and a big statue of a Thai angel, nothing costs more than $14.

$$–$$$ For a nicer meal on the North Shore, try **Lei Lei's** (57–091 Kamehameha Hwy., Kahuku; ☎ 808/293-2662) in the Turtle Bay Resort. In winter, during big-surf season, you'll find all the top wave riders here chowing down on American food with some Pacific accents. It's casual but not cheap, with dishes like Dijon-rosemary-rubbed double pork loin chop priced at $21. The fresh island catch of the day, at $24, is always a good choice. Take a seat on the open-air lanai overlooking the golf course.

THE WEST SIDE

$ The eating options are slim on the Waianae Coast, which is the least developed area of the island. But **Hannara's** (86–078 Farrington Hwy., Makaha; ☎ 808/696-6137) is a good, no-frills diner, serving big breakfasts of everything from eggs Benedict to fried-rice-stuffed omelets, Hawaiian food, and local plate-lunch items including chicken katsu and what the restaurant claims is the best hamburger steak on the island. And truth be told, the gravy-slathered hamburger patty with two scoops of rice is pretty damn good.

$ A healthier alternative is **Aloha Aina Café** ★ (85–773 Farrington Hwy., Waianae; ☎ 808/697-8808). This outpost is an extension of the MA'O Organic Farm, a nonprofit organization that teaches at-risk youth about farming and leadership. Sit in the woody, country-kitchen interior and enjoy filling turkey chili, tofu burgers, or Portuguese bean soup—for about $6—made with organic produce from just down the road.

Shrimp Trucks

Large-scale shrimp farming took hold in Kahuku, on the North Shore, in the early 1990s, and it wasn't long before the first lunch wagons serving freshwater Kahuku-raised shrimp made their appearance. Today, shrimp trucks are one of the area's prime roadside attractions, and **Giovanni's Aloha Shrimp** (next to Kahuku Sugar Mill, Kamehameha Hwy.; ☎ 808/293-1839; **$$**), which is actually owned by a guy named Troy Nitsche, is the granddaddy of them all. Opened in 1993 and cited in guidebooks and food magazines ever since, it's repeatedly heralded as the best. In fact, the place is so popular that it needs more shrimp than the Kahuku farms can supply—Giovanni's now gets its shrimp shipped in from Kauai. Carloads of tourists pull up to the graffiti-coated white truck to sit at plastic benches under a tent and eat platefuls of shrimp: fried and coated in garlic (and curiously called scampi), steamed and served with butter and lemon, or on fire with a famous spicy sauce. For $12, you get a dozen shrimp (and two scoops of rice) along with a side of attitude from the girls at the counter that says, "I'm sick of shrimp and tourists."

To me, the whole point of eating at a Kahuku shrimp truck is to have superfresh shrimp just plucked from a Kahuku pond. So my favorite is **Romy's Kahuku Prawns & Shrimp Hut** ★ (56–781 Kamehameha Hwy.; ☎ 808/232-2202; **$$**), a stand set up right in front of Romy Aguinaldo's 31 ponds on 40 acres. During one recent visit, the friendly man at the window told me they were out of prawns, "But we're harvesting some right now." That's how fresh the crustaceans are—firm and ever so slightly sweet, you're guaranteed a naturally good product. Here, you get a half pound of shrimp or prawns (8–10) for $11.

Joining the fray recently was the **Blue Water Shrimp & Seafood Co.** (just south of Turtle Bay Resort; no phone; **$$**). Part of the local pizza chain Magoo's, Blue Water is competing with the other trucks by foregoing freshwater shrimp altogether—it serves tiger prawns from the ocean. Deep blue and painted with a cheesy underwater scene, you can't miss the truck. If serving locally raised shrimp wasn't my No. 1 criterion for best shrimp truck, I'd say this spot actually has the best food. Order the "really garlic shrimp" and you get a Styrofoam box filled with shrimp (seven for $11) sautéed in a garlicky chili sauce dotted with capers, along with crunchy slaw, a slice of pineapple, and two scoops of rice. Plus, service here is sunny. Take a seat at the wood picnic benches painted fire-engine red, then browse the Only Show in Town antiques shop.

WHY YOU'RE HERE: OAHU'S BEACHES

As Oahu's population grows, the number of people on the beaches increases too. And folks never stop thinking of ways to use the water—surfing, windsurfing, kiteboarding, snorkeling, swimming, strolling, sunning, boating, fishing . . . the list goes on. For more information on what to do at Oahu's beaches, see "Active Oahu" on p. 157.

THE WAIKIKI COAST

Gold-sand **Ala Moana Beach Park** ★★ ("by the sea"), on sunny Mamala Bay, stretches for more than a mile along Honolulu's coast between downtown and Waikiki. It has a man-made beach, created in the 1930s by filling a coral reef with Waianae Coast sand, as well as its own lagoon, yacht harbor, tennis courts, music pavilion, bathhouses, picnic tables, and enough wide-open green spaces to accommodate four million visitors a year. The water is calm, protected by black lava rocks set offshore.

Famous **Waikiki Beach** ★★★, 1½-mile-long crescent of imported sand (from Molokai), at the foot of a string of high-rise hotels, is home to the world's longest-running beach party. Despite its small size, Waikiki attracts nearly five million visitors a year.

A string of beaches extend between Sans Souci State Recreational Area, near Diamond Head to the east, and Duke Kahanamoku Beach, in front of the Hilton Hawaiian Village, to the west. Great stretches include **Kuhio Beach,** next to the Sheraton Moana Surfrider; **Grey's Beach,** in front of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel; and **Sans Souci,** in front of the New Otani Kaimana Beach Hotel.

Facilities in Waikiki include showers, lifeguards, restrooms, grills, picnic tables, and pavilions at the Queen's Surf end of the beach (at Kapiolani Park, between the zoo and the aquarium). The best place to park is at Kapiolani Park, near Sans Souci.

EAST OAHU

Oahu's most popular snorkeling spot is **Hanauma Bay** ★★, a volcanic crater with a broken sea wall; its small, curved, 2,000-foot gold-sand beach is packed elbow-to-elbow with people.

Sandy Beach ★ is one of the best bodysurfing beaches on Oahu, but it's also one of the most dangerous. Weak swimmers and children should stay out of the water here; Sandy Beach's heroic lifeguards make more rescues in a year than those at any other beach. Take a look at the flags they post to alert beachgoers to the day's surf: Green means safe, yellow caution, and red indicates very dangerous water conditions. Facilities include restrooms and parking. From Waikiki, drive east on the H-1, which becomes Kalanianaole Highway; proceed past Hawaii Kai, up the hill to Hanauma Bay, past the Halona Blow Hole, and along the coast. The next big, gold, sandy beach you see ahead on the right is Sandy Beach. TheBus no. 22 will also bring you here.

Makapuu Beach Park is a beautiful 1,000-foot-long gold-sand beach cupped in the stark black Koolau cliffs on Oahu's easternmost point. You've probably seen this site featured in TV shows like *Hawaii Five-O* or *Magnum, P.I.* In summer, the ocean here is gentle, and swimming and diving are perfect. But come winter, Makapuu is hit with expert bodysurfers, who come for big, pounding waves that are too dangerous for regular swimmers. Small boards—3 feet or less with no skeg

(bottom fin)—are permitted; regular board surfing is banned by state law. Facilities include restrooms, lifeguards, barbecue grills, picnic tables, and parking. To get here, follow Kalanianaole Highway toward Waimanalo, or take TheBus no. 57 or 58.

THE WINDWARD COAST

One of Hawaii's best spots for swimming, the crystal-clear lagoon at gold-sand **Lanikai Beach** is like a giant saltwater swimming pool filled with resident tropical fish and sea turtles. It's a mile long and thin in places, but the sand's as soft as talcum powder. Prevailing onshore trade winds make this an excellent place for sailing and windsurfing. Kayakers often paddle out to the two tiny offshore Mokulua islands, which are seabird sanctuaries. There are no facilities. From Waikiki, take the H-1 to the Pali Highway (Hwy. 61) through the Nuuanu Pali Tunnel to Kailua, where the Pali Highway becomes Kailua Road as it proceeds through town. At Kalaheo Avenue, turn right and follow the coast about 2 miles to Kailua Beach Park; just past it, turn left at the T intersection and drive uphill on Aalapapa Drive, a one-way street that loops back as Mokulua Drive. Park on Mokulua Drive and walk down any of the eight public-access lanes to the shore. Or, take TheBus no. 56 or 57 (Kailua) and transfer to the shuttle bus.

Two-mile-long, wide, and golden, **Kailua Beach** ★★★ has dunes, palm trees, panoramic views, and offshore islets that are home to seabirds. The swimming is excellent. It's also a favorite spot to sail catamarans, bodysurf or windsurf the gentle waves, and paddle a kayak. Water conditions are quite safe, especially at the mouth of Kaelepulu Stream, where toddlers play in the freshwater shallows at the middle of the beach park.

The 35-acre beach park is intersected by a freshwater stream and watched over by lifeguards. Facilities include picnic tables, barbecues, restrooms, a volleyball court, a public boat ramp, free parking, and an open-air cafe. Kailua's new bike path weaves through the park, and windsurfer and kayak rentals are available as well. To get here, take Pali Highway (Hwy. 61) to Kailua, drive through town, turn right on Kalaheo Avenue, and go a mile until you see the beach on your left. Or, take TheBus no. 56 or 57 into Kailua, then the no. 70 shuttle.

Kualoa Regional Park ★★ is on Kaneohe Bay's north shore, at the foot of the spiky Koolau Ridge. This 150-acre coco palm–fringed peninsula is the biggest beach park on the windward side and one of Hawaii's most scenic. Its long, narrow, white-sand beach is ideal for swimming, walking, beachcombing, kite-flying, or just enjoying the natural beauty. The waters are shallow and safe for swimming year-round (lifeguards are on duty). At low tide, you can swim or wade out to Mokolii (also known as Chinaman's Hat), which has a small sandy beach and is a bird preserve. The park is on Kamehameha Highway (Hwy. 83) in Kualoa; you can get here via TheBus no. 55.

THE NORTH SHORE

Malaekahana Bay State Recreation Area ★★, almost a mile-long white crescent, is excellent for swimming. On a weekday you may be the only one here; but should some net fisherman—or kindred soul—intrude upon your delicious privacy, you can swim out to Goat Island (or wade across at low tide) and play Robinson Crusoe.

(The islet is a sanctuary for seabirds and turtles; don't chase them.) Facilities include restrooms, barbecue grills, picnic tables, outdoor showers, and parking.

To get here, take Kamehameha Highway (Hwy. 83) 2 miles north of the Polynesian Cultural Center; as you enter the main gate, you'll come upon the wooded beach park. Or you can take TheBus no. 52.

Waimea Beach Park ★★ is a deep, sandy bowl providing gentle summer waves that are excellent for swimming, snorkeling, and bodysurfing. But winter waves pound the narrow bay, sometimes rising to 50 feet high. When the surf's really up, very strong currents and shore breaks sweep the bay—and it seems like everyone on Oahu drives out to Waimea to get a look at the monster waves and those who ride them.

Facilities include lifeguards, restrooms, showers, parking, and nearby restaurants and shops in Haleiwa town. The beach is on Kamehameha Highway (Hwy. 83); from Waikiki, you can take TheBus no. 52.

LEEWARD OAHU/THE WAIANAE COAST

When surf's up here, it's spectacular at **Makaha Beach Park** ★★: Monstrous waves pound the beach. The original home of Hawaii's big-wave surfing championship, surfers today know it as the home of Buffalo's Big Board Surf Classic. Nearly a mile long, this half-moon, gold-sand beach is tucked between 231-foot Lahilahi Point, which locals call Black Rock, and Kepuhi Point, a toe of the Waianae mountain range. Summer is the best time to visit, when the water's safe for swimming. ***A caveat:*** This is a "local" beach; you're welcome, of course, but make sure to be respectful of the beach and the residents.

Facilities include restrooms, lifeguards, and parking. To get here, take the H-1 freeway to the end of the line, where it becomes Farrington Highway (Hwy. 93), and follow it to the beach; or you can take TheBus no. 51.

Where Farrington Highway (Hwy. 93) ends, the wilderness of **Kaena Point State Park** begins. It's a remote 853-acre coastline park of empty beaches, sand dunes, cliffs, and deep-blue water. This is the last sandy stretch of shore on the northwest coast of Oahu. Sometimes, it's known as Keawalua Beach or Puau Beach, but everybody here calls it **Yokohama Bay** ★, after the Japanese immigrants who came from that port city to work the cane fields and fished along this shoreline. When the surf's calm—mainly in summer—this is a good area for snorkeling, diving, swimming, shore fishing, and picnicking. When surf's up, board- and bodysurfers are out in droves; don't go in the water then unless you're an expert. There are no lifeguards or facilities, except at the park entrance, where there's a restroom and lifeguard stand.

THE TOP SIGHTS & ATTRACTIONS

For residents like me, Oahu isn't about specific attractions. We're anchored here by the indescribable island feel that's around us all day, every day—seeing the powerful Koolau Mountains as we drive across the island on the freeway, or gazing in wonder at a late-afternoon rainbow arcing over downtown. It's the island itself that's the draw, not museums or former palaces.

But having said that, aside from its natural beauty, Oahu has international historical significance for its pivotal role in World War II, ancient sites that reveal secrets of traditional Polynesian life, and some remarkable art.

WORLD WAR II SITES

Oahu's three major World War II memorials are clustered at Pearl Harbor, and the Hawaii Army Museum is in Waikiki. At Pearl Harbor, of course, the crown jewel is the *Arizona* Memorial. Right next to it is the USS *Bowfin* Submarine Museum & Park, and the Battleship *Missouri* Memorial, on Ford Island, is a short shuttle ride away. While the *Arizona* is part of the National Park Service and the *Bowfin* and *Missouri* are run by nonprofit organizations, together they make a fascinating whole, and it's possible to see all three in 1 day (although you'll be pretty tired by the end). Do the tour according to the chronology of the war of the Pacific, starting with the *Arizona,* continuing to the *Bowfin,* then the *Missouri,* on whose deck the war ended (about a 6-hr. day of military might). If you have time for just one, it should be the *Arizona* Memorial. On December 7, 1941, Japanese planes bombed Oahu's Pearl Harbor—home to the U.S.'s Pacific fleet—and 2,280 military and 68 civilians were killed. Eight battleships were destroyed or badly damaged, and as a result the United States plunged into World War II. For many Americans, that "day of infamy" is seared into their memories, but until 1962 there was no appropriate place for them to visit. In that year, an elegant, simple, and highly affecting memorial, designed by architect Alfred Preis, was built over one of the lost ships, the USS *Arizona,* and it has been Oahu's top visitor attraction since the day it opened.

The *Arizona* Memorial ★★★ (1 Arizona Memorial Rd.; ☎ 808/422-0561; www.arizonamemorial.org; 7:30am–5pm, first tour starts at 8, subsequent tours every 15 min. thereafter, with last tour at 3pm; free) is part of a visitors complex at Pearl Harbor, which is still an active naval station. The small on-site museum and bookstore are always crowded—about 4,500 people stream through here daily, so it's best to go early before the throngs arrive and the heat of the day sets in. (Also, leave any kind of bag—purse, fanny pack, backpack, camera bag, or diaper bag—in the car, as security is very strict.) Built in 1980, the visitor center was designed to accommodate 750,000 people a year but today the number is around 1.6 million and the worn structure is sinking. Plans to build a new $27-million building by 2008 are in the works.

Your short boat trip to the memorial is preceded by a powerful 23-minute documentary that vividly depicts the attack. Emerging from this film to the actual scene of it is highly surreal; and once you get to the *Arizona* Memorial, a visceral reminder of the attack awaits—the water above the USS *Arizona* is shiny with oil that still oozes from the ship. (And the knowledge that down below, in the ship, are the remains of many of the 1,777 crew only heightens emotions.)

This tribute to the people who perished is to Oahuans what the Empire State Building is to New Yorkers—we all know about it, but lots of us have never been there. However, the memorial took on new significance to visitors and locals after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. In fact, many people now visit the memorial on the anniversary of 9/11, when there is a bell ringing and a minute of silence. The flags that fly over the memorial are now sought-after symbols. Tattered by trade winds, the flags are replaced every 6 weeks. While they used to be given to a local Boy Scout troop to be burned (a proper flag disposal), they are now requested across the country, and have been given to the National Mall in Washington, D.C., and New York City's Police Museum, among others.

An important note on travel directions: Driving to the memorial is tricky. From Honolulu, take H-1 West and exit at USS Arizona/Stadium 15A. Don't take the Pearl Harbor exit. Continue on HI-99 (Kamehameha Hwy.) and turn left at the fourth traffic light onto Arizona Memorial Place. At the base of the hill, turn right, and the parking lot is on the left. For public transport, you can take the no. 20 or 42 bus from Waikiki to the USS *Arizona* Memorial Visitor Center.

At the **USS *Bowfin* Submarine Museum & Park** ★ kids (11 Arizona Memorial Dr.; ☎ 808/423-1341; www.bowfin.org; daily 8am–5pm; $10 adults, $3 children under 12), adjacent to the *Arizona* Memorial, the famed submarine is berthed off the park grounds where the 10,000-square-foot museum sits. Submarines were responsible for some of the most effective retaliations against the Japanese, and here you have the chance to crawl around one of the most successful World War II predators of the deep—the USS *Bowfin,* which was nicknamed the "Pearl Harbor Avenger." Experiencing the claustrophobia of submarine life is the draw here—men were stacked like cards in a deck in the sleeping quarters and you'll feel what that meant as you tour; you'll also have the opportunity to peer into the dark chambers of the torpedo room (boys will especially love this). The museum section of the site is less interesting to me, featuring the usual array of paintings, photographs, models, and things that go boom (a C-3 missile). See above for driving instructions and bus information.

The **Battleship *Missouri* Memorial** ★ kids (Ford Island; ☎ 808/973-2494; www.ussmissouri.com; daily 9am–5pm; $16, or $20 in combination with USS *Bowfin,* Chief's tour $22, Captain's tour $33, Explorer's tour $33) takes you from crushing blow to stunning victory—the "Mighty Mo" is the ship on which Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu formally surrendered to Gen. Douglas MacArthur on September 2, 1945. Brought to Hawaii in 1998 (after serving in the Persian Gulf War) to complete the Pacific Theater picture, the *Missouri* is now a museum/memorial with exhibits throughout consisting of videos, photographs, audio recordings of people like Admiral Stuart Murray (Mighty Mo's captain at the time of the surrender), and blueprints of the ship. Visitors can explore the teak-wood decks on their own or take the 1-hour Chief's guided tour, but if you're really interested in naval history, I recommend one of two premium tours that take you to areas off-limits to the general public. The 90-minute Captain's tour includes refreshments in the captain's cabin and walks through the officers' quarters, the area where the massive anchors are dropped, and to see the big guns. The 90-minute Explorer's tour equips you with flashlights and takes you to the bowels of the ship, into the fire rooms and "Broadway," where the switchboard and analog computers controlled the ship's massive gun turrets—perfect for people who watch the History Channel and love war lore. Both are worthwhile, and kids will love climbing up the ladders and clambering through steel hatches.

Berthed at Ford Island, which is still an active military facility, the *Missouri* is accessible only by shuttle bus from the USS *Bowfin* Submarine Museum & Park (see above), which is also where you buy your tickets.

For hard-core military-history fans only, the **Hawaii Army Museum** (2055 Kalia Rd.; ☎ 808/955-9552; www.hiarmymuseumsoc.org; 10am–4:15pm Tues–Sun; free) is the last of Oahu's sites dedicated to war. Part of the Fort DeRussy Recreation Center, 18 military-controlled acres in Waikiki, the museum is housed

in a former R&R center with exhibits that span the ages from ancient Hawaiian warfare to the Vietnam War (and, of course, there's a section on World War II).

ANCIENT OAHU

Sprinkled around the island are the fascinating and often highly mysterious remnants of traditional Hawaiian culture. Because precontact Hawaiians had no written language, Oahu's ancient history is largely speculative. Accounts of traditions and events are pieced together from archaeological studies and fragments of oral history that survived. That's why dates and quantitative data are sketchy. But it's kind of sexy, and appropriate, the way legend mixes with fact in Hawaii. Bear in mind that sites such as *heiau* (temples), are still sacred to Hawaiians. Don't climb on them or take souvenir rocks (remember what happened to the Brady Bunch?).

> *"Nothing had prepared me for Honolulu . . . . All these strange people live close to each other, with different languages and different thoughts; they believe in a different god and they have different values; two passions alone they share, love and hunger. And somehow as you watch them, you have an impression of extraordinary vitality."*
>
> —W. Somerset Maugham, 1921

Towering in importance above all the rest is Oahu's largest remaining sacrificial temple, **Puu O Mahuka Heiau** ★★ (Pupukea Rd.; free), where three of Captain George Vancouver's men, who were sent ashore to fetch fresh water, were sacrificed in 1792. Up on Pupukea, a 300-foot bluff overlooking Waimea Bay, Puu O Mahuka may look like little more than a big rectangular stone wall, but there's no disputing the mana emanating from this sacred site, built in the 1600s and occupying a full 5 acres. This is where the great kahuna (high priest) Kaopulupulu presided in the 1770s. In 1779, Kahahana, king of Oahu, didn't trust Kaopulupulu and had him murdered, but before the kahuna died, he made his famous prediction that foreigners would conquer Oahu, according to Hawaiian historian George Kanahele. Today the site, a National Historic Monument, is tranquil, with few visitors. Hawaiians still come to drape leis on the rocks as offerings to the gods represented here: Kanaloa, Kane, Ku, and Lono. If you visit in November, come at dusk; you can see the Makalii (Pleiades to Westerners) rise at Kaena Point to the left. The event marks the start of Makahiki—time of harvest and bounty for Hawaiians. The view is spectacular, sweeping from Kaena Point, spanning the entire North Shore. Walk to the bottom of the *heiau,* take a short red-dirt trail to the edge and look down at the white crescent of Waimea Bay.

If you're driving: Coming from Haleiwa on Kamehameha Highway, Puu O Mahuka is just a mile past Waimea Bay. Turn right on Pupukea Road (at Foodland), drive ¾ mile up, and make a right on an unmarked, single-lane paved (barely) road that will lead you to the parking lot at the *heiau.* ***By bus:*** Take no. 52 to Foodland, and then walk up Pupukea Road.

At **Ulupo Heiau** ★★ (Manu O'o St., Kailua; free) you'll feel like you've stepped back in time—it's hard to believe you're just 15 minutes from downtown Honolulu and 2 miles from Kailua at this serene spot (the name means "night of inspiration"). Archaeologists estimate that Ulupo Heiau was built between A.D. 700 and 800, originally as a temple to agriculture and later as a place to pray for

victory in war. The walls of the terraced stone platform reach upwards of 30 feet. Surrounded by mango trees, the *heiau* is one of the oldest in Hawaii, which makes sense because Kailua was one of the first areas in the islands settled by Polynesians. At the bottom of the *heiau* is a lo'i (taro patch) where you may see volunteer Bill Fien working the muddy square of land as Hawaiians have for centuries. (If he's on a break, ask him about taro farming and the area's natural springs). If you have time to wander, a path from the *heiau* leads to the remnants of ancient lo'i and, beyond that, Kawainui Marsh, a protected bird habitat.

If you're driving: Take the Pali Highway from Honolulu. After you've passed through the tunnels, take the first left after the second stoplight (Castle Junction) onto Uluoa Street, then turn right on Manu Aloha Street, and right on Manu O'o Street, where you'll see a parking lot and YMCA. The *heiau* is behind the YMCA.

Amidst Central Oahu's pineapple fields and military housing is another of the island's most sacred Hawaiian sites: **Kukaniloko Birthstones State Monument** ✯. For 700 years, this is where royalty came to give birth. Hawaiians believed that the stones relieved pain and that the gods blessed children born here. More than 80 rounded lava rocks, their tops crusted with lichen, are clustered on this flat plain, surrounded by thin-trunked coconut and eucalyptus trees. Kukaniloko is worth a stop en route to the North Shore from Honolulu.

If you're driving: Take Kamehameha Highway toward Wahiawa. You'll come to an intersection with California Avenue; ¾ mile past the intersection, at Whitmore Avenue, turn left onto a dirt road. Proceed a quarter mile through the pineapple field until you come to the parking area.

If you go out to Makaha to do the Kaena Point hike or are staying at the Makaha Golf Club Resort & Hotel, I recommend stopping at one final outdoor temple: **Kane Aki Heiau** (Makaha Valley Rd.; ☎ 808/695-8174; Tues–Sun 10am–2pm). A smaller *heiau* than the ones mentioned above, Kane Aki Heiau was dedicated to Lono, god of the harvest and fertility. The site has been nicely restored with a grass hut on-site, though since it sits on private land, the *heiau* is open to visitors for only 4 hours a day.

If you're driving: From Honolulu, take H-1 westbound until it turns into Farrington Highway. Turn right on Makaha Valley Road and follow the KANEAKI HEIAU signs.

MUSEUMS OF SCIENCE & CULTURE

While Oahu's great outdoors is the big draw, the island has been making a big push over the last few years to publicize its art and cultural institutions, playing up its improving museums and events in promotional material. It's not just hype. From ancient Hawaiian history to cutting-edge contemporary art, Oahu's museums are worth your time. The island's geographical location has resulted in it being a nexus of Polynesian, Asian, and Western art.

I never tire of the **Bishop Museum** ✯✯✯ (1525 Bernice St.; see map of Chinatown on p. 154; ☎ 808/847-3511; www.bishopmuseum.org; daily 9am–5pm except Christmas; $15). It's like our British Museum—filled with irreplaceable cultural and natural artifacts from across the Pacific (it's also one of the foremost research centers on natural history in the region). The museum was the brainchild of Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, the half-Caucasian, half-Hawaiian noblewoman who was the last descendant of the royal Kamehameha line. In the late 1800s, she saw that her culture and people were slipping away and wanted to

Hawaiian History 101

If you want to take a tour and learn about Hawaiian culture, I recommend **Mauka Makai Excursions** (350 Ward Ave.; ☎ 808/255-2206; www.hawaiianecotours.net; $50–$80), led by the ebullient Dominic Kealoha Aki. Aki is the real deal—his knowledge of history is extraordinary and he's careful about following Hawaiian protocol such as chanting before entering sacred sites. He'll take you to nooks and crannies, such as a sea cave where you can see petroglyphs that most locals don't even know about. Mauka Makai offers two full-day tours, Legends and Myths of Koolau-poko (includes Ulupo Heiau) and Sacred Sites of Oahu's North Shore (includes Puu O Mahuka Heiau). If you have less time, there's a half-day tour. The fee is worth every penny.

preserve her Hawaiian artifacts and royal family heirlooms. Though she did not live to see that happen—Bishop died in 1884—her husband, Charles Reed Bishop, founded the museum in 1889 in accordance with his wife's will.

Today the museum bustles with activity like a small college campus, composed of three buildings plus a planetarium, each brimming with exhibits. If you have limited time, head directly to Hawaiian Hall. Set in a dark, hushed 1890s black lava-stone building, this is where you'll find the princess's treasures (along with other pieces collected in the last 125 years)—hundreds of Hawaiian artifacts in glass cases on three tiered levels, in the center of which hangs a model of a sperm whale, a symbol of bygone whaling days (sperm whales are rare in Hawaii waters today). The skilled (and lost) artistry of old Hawaii is seen in the royal capes of gold and red—made from hundreds of thousands of feathers (most of the birds they came from are now extinct). One on view actually draped the shoulders of King Kamehameha I, a figure who looms large in the collective consciousness of everyone who has grown up on Oahu. Another distinctive treasure are the lei niho palaoa, necklaces made of thin strands of finely braided human hair, that only the highest rank of *alii* (royalty) wore. Also of note are the artifacts from everyday life—stone poi pounders, the island's last grass hut, big wood bowls, and fish hooks carved from bone. Unfortunately, Hawaiian Hall begins a 12- to 18-month $4.5-million renovation in April 2006, the first in 50 years. But museum president Bill Brown told me that during that time, key artifacts will be on view in other buildings, most probably the Polynesian Hall and Castle Hall.

For a bigger Pacific picture, head to the Polynesian Hall, a two-floor gallery of clothing, weapons, tools, and other artifacts from Tonga, Fiji, the Marquesas, and other cultures in Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. Castle Hall is where traveling exhibitions are housed. The on-site planetarium teaches visitors about Hawaii's skies.

The newest attraction at the Bishop, the **Science Adventure Center** kids, opened in November 2005 to much acclaim. A modern curvilinear building with three levels of interactive exhibits, it's *the* place to learn about natural Hawaii. One of the most effective exhibits is a high-tech re-creation of Kilauea's active vent

called Pu'u O'o, where visitors watch staff throw cinders into a furnace to melt it into lava, which drips out glowing orange. Other displays show how waves form and feature Hawaii's indigenous wildlife.

Seminars and performances: Staff scientists like entomologist Neal Evanhuis and archaeologist Tianlong Jiao are leaders in their fields, constantly discovering new bug species or forming new theories about migration to Hawaii. I like to learn about what they're doing by attending the museum's seminars, talks, and workshops, all listed on the website. In any given week, there's at least one such event scheduled. The museum also features daily hula performances (at 11am and 2pm) and Hawaiian-craft demonstrations.

An offshoot of the Bishop Museum, the **Hawaii Maritime Center** ★★ kids (Pier 7, next to Aloha Tower, Honolulu Harbor; ☎ 808/536-6373; www.bishopmuseum.org/exhibits/hmc/hmc.html; daily 8:30am–5pm; $7.50 adults, $4.50 children 4–12) is a 15-minute drive away at Honolulu Harbor, right near where big cruise ships dock. Expertly curated, this complex of a museum and two ships covers the history of everything maritime, from surfing to luxury liners to ancient Hawaiian navigation to whaling. Kids love the giant humpback-whale skeleton suspended from the ceiling of the King Kalakaua Boathouse Museum. The center includes the *Falls of Clyde,* an 1878 four-masted four-rigger ship, the last one of its kind on the planet, which you can explore. Also berthed at the center is the Hokulea, the seagoing pride of Oahu. This replica of a traditional double-hulled sailing canoe is what Polynesians sailed across the Pacific Ocean in. But the Hokulea isn't always there—captained by local hero Nainoa Thompson, the vessel goes on long-distance trips, navigating by the stars as the ancient Hawaiians did.

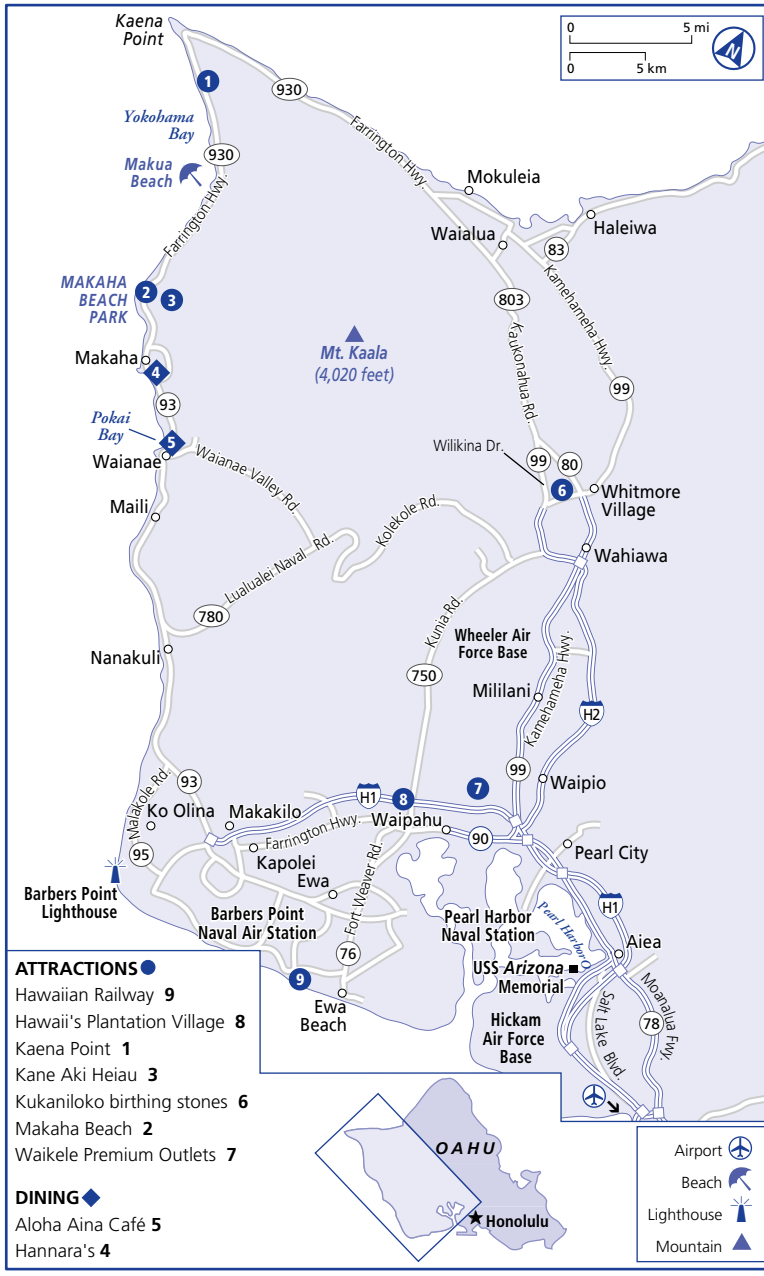
PALACES, VILLAGES & OTHER HISTORIC SITES

In less than 100 years, Hawaii's royalty went from living in thatched houses to a palace that had electricity when the White House was still in the dark. At **Iolani Palace** ★ (364 S. King St.; see Downtown & Chinatown map on p. 154; ☎ 808/522-0832; www.iolanipalace.org; Tues–Sat 9am–4pm; $6 adults, $3 kids 5–17; grand tour 9am–2pm; $20 adults, $5 kids 5–17; reservations recommended), you see the embodiment of that lavishness and a powerful symbol of a lost sovereign nation—Queen Liliuokalani was held here under house arrest after her overthrow. King Kalakaua had the four-story Italian Renaissance palace built in 1882 to the tune of $360,000, a price that almost bankrupted the government. But Hawaiian royalty didn't stay in it long; 11 years later the U.S. government overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy. A symbol of independence for today's sovereignty movement, this is where activist marches for Hawaiian issues often start. The red-and-gold throne room, holding the royal seats of King Kalakaua and Queen Kapiolani, gives an inkling of the Hawaiian nobles' taste for opulence. You can take the 90-minute guided Grand Tour of the palace (be prepared to put on booties so you don't scuff the shiny wood floors), or explore the Palace Galleries on your own. In the galleries, you'll view the royal jewels, including a crown that was stolen by a guard in the 1890s, but was later recovered and removed from the palace with the other jewels for safekeeping. In 2000 the whole set was reinstalled in the refurbished galleries, back in the palace for the first time in more than 100 years. Combine a visit to Iolani Palace with a stop at the Hawaii State Art Museum across the street.

Queen Emma Summer Palace ★★ (2193 Pali Hwy.; see Downtown & Chinatown map on p. 154; ☎ 808/595-3167; www.daughtersofhawaii.org; daily 9am–4pm; $6 adults, $1 children) is a royal dwelling of a much more modest sort. Honolulu matrons dressed in muumuu—members of the Daughters of Hawaii—maintain (with no state or federal funding) the country getaway of Queen Emma, wife of King Kamehameha IV. The 1848 "palace" is really a seven-room Greek Revival home, but the estate is a lovely stop, and the ladies on duty are always happy to chat—talking with them is a good way to meet people who have deep roots in Hawaii. "We're informal here," says staffer Nancy Sager. You can tickle the ivories of the 1865 Dresden piano "if you really know how to play." The furnishings—like 19th-century English carved beds and feathered *kahili* (standards)—were taken from all seven of Queen Emma's homes. Walking through the house and around the lush green grounds offers a glimpse into the short-lived era of royal gentility in Hawaii. Follow your visit here with a stop at the Nuuanu Pali (p. 151).

After the gilt of royal heritage at places such as Iolani Palace and the Bishop Museum, **Hawaii's Plantation Village** ★ (94–95 Waipahu St., Waipahu; see Central & Leeward Oahu map on p. 145; ☎ 808/677-0110; www.hawaiiplantationvillage.org; Mon–Sat 10am–3pm; $13 adults, $10 seniors, $5 children 4–11) reveals life on the other end of the economic spectrum. This place showcases how plantation workers—hailing from China to Puerto Rico—lived around 1900. Restored and replica camp houses, the plantation store (where the laborers spent most of the little cash they made), and community venues such as a sumo ring are set on the 50 acres of the Waipahu Cultural Garden Park. Homes are filled with the tools of daily life donated by local families. The tour is an hour long, and it's worth the time. Afterward, go see the Kukaniloko birthing stones (p. 141).

If you walk towards the water on Richards Street and make a left on King Street, you'll come to **Kawaiahao Church** (at Punchbowl and King sts.; ☎ 808/522-1333). The island's oldest church, completed in 1842, is on the site of the grass thatch house of worship that the first Protestant missionaries built in 1820. Made of giant coral blocks cut from the reef, the church is airy and white inside with wood beams and pews. Hawaiian elite have their weddings here, and services are held in Hawaiian on Sunday at 10:30am—that's the time to come. At the **Mission Houses Museum** (553 King St., at Kawaiahao St.; ☎ 808/531-0481; www.missionhouses.org; Tues–Sat 10am–4pm; $10 adults, $6 students), the course of Hawaiian history was changed forever. Protestant missionaries set up their Sandwich Islands Mission here in 1820, and the small cluster of buildings remains. A "living history" museum, houses are set up with period items—dishes on tables, wooden four-poster beds—as if the missionaries were still in residence. The centerpiece of the grounds is the 1821 Frame House, the oldest wood house in the state. The missionaries introduced the written word to Hawaii, and the Printing House is the place where the first Hawaiian-language book—the Bible, of course—was produced. In the coral-block Chamberlain House is an exhibition space where shows featuring traditions such as Hawaiian quilting are installed. Founded in 1920 by the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society, the museum still counts missionary descendents on its board—it's kind of a junior society league. I recommend taking the 1-hour guided tour ($13 includes admission and the tour fee) that is offered at 11am, 1pm, and 2:45pm.


Kaena Point
Yokohama Bay
Makua Beach
MAKAHA BEACH PARK
Makaha
Pokai Bay
Waianae
Maili
Nanakuli
Barbers Point Lighthouse
Ko Olina
Makakilo
Kapolei
Ewa
Barbers Point Naval Air Station
Ewa Beach
Waipahu
Farrington Hwy.
Waianae Valley Rd.
Lualualei Naval Rd.
Makaha Rd.
Fort Weaver Rd.
Mt. Kaala (4,020 feet)
Mokuleia
Waialua
Haleiwa
Kamehameha Hwy.
Kaukonahua Rd.
Wilikina Dr.
Whitmore Village
Wahiawa
Kolekole Rd.
Kunia Rd.
Wheeler Air Force Base
Mililani
Waipio
Pearl City
Pearl Harbor Naval Station
Pearl Harbor
Aiea
USS Arizona Memorial
Hickam Air Force Base
Salt Lake Blvd.
Moanalua Fwy.
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ATTRACTIONS
Hawaiian Railway 9
Hawaii's Plantation Village 8
Kaena Point 1
Kane Aki Heiau 3
Kukaniloko birthing stones 6
Makaha Beach 2
Waikele Premium Outlets 7
DINING
Aloha Aina Café 5
Hannara's 4
OAHU
Honolulu
Airport
Beach
Lighthouse
Mountain

ART MUSEUMS

You might think a small museum in a smallish city like Honolulu wouldn't be worth a look, but there are surprising gems to be found at the **Honolulu Academy of Arts** ★ (900 Beretania St.; see Downtown & Chinatown map on p. 154; ☎ 808/532-8700; www.honoluluacademy.org; Tues–Sat 10am–4:30pm, Sun 1–5pm; $7 adults, $4 seniors and students, free for kids under 12). It's a no-brainer that an institution in the Pacific would have one of the best Asian collections in the country. For me, the highlight of the collection is the James Michener Collection of Japanese Ukiyo-e prints, which includes that iconic blue swell *The Great Wave off Kanegawa* by woodblock-print master Katsushika Hokusai. There are also surprising Western masterpieces to be found, like Whistler's 1881 *Arrangement in Black No. 5: Lady Meux,* a seductive portrait of a woman outlined in white ermine, and Gauguin's *Two Nudes on a Tahitian Beach.* The Dole Company hired Georgia O'Keeffe to paint promotional pictures of the islands, and in 1939 the artist spent 4 months in the islands (and refused to paint a pineapple). Four of the paintings she did, such as a lush green study of Maui's Iao Valley, are in the museum's collection and sometimes hang in the contemporary gallery. In an effort to appeal to a younger crowd, the museum brings in shows of cutting-edge artists such as Neo Rauch and hosts the monthly theme party Art After Dark.

Riding the Rails

The first time I went to the **Hawaiian Railway** ★ kids (Ewa; see Central & Leeward Oahu map on p. 145; ☎ 808/681-5461; www.hawaiianrailway.com; Sun at 1 and 3pm; $10 adults, $7 children 2–12 and seniors), I was expecting a hokey train ride but ended up getting a completely new view of a part of the island I don't know well and learning a lot about Oahu. The operation is a labor of love by train buffs. "I've realized my dream here," says Corey Hood, who with his family restored a crumbling 1940s Navy box car. A former military staffer, Hood and his cohorts have put their own money into the Hawaiian railway, using the old roadbed that runs from Ewa to Pearl Harbor. Originally built by wealthy industrialist and plantation owner Benjamin Dillingham, the railroad was used to transport sugar to Honolulu. One can't help thinking that if the railway worked in 1900, why can't it be used to ease traffic now? Visitors pile into open-air cars that lumber along at 15 mph across the Ewa coral plain, and you get a great detailed narration of the area's and the railroad's history. In the spring, you can see whales spouting off Kahe Point. You pass by the Ko Olina resort and see golfers on the greens. After your 90-minute train trip, check out George Joy's model-train operation in a boxcar on the property. Kids love it.

By car: Take H-1 west, exit on 5A Ewa. Stay on Highway 76 south (Ft. Weaver Rd.) for 2½ miles. Turn right at the Tesoro gas station onto Renton Road, and continue for 1½ miles. Turn left onto a small lane, and you'll see the entrance to Hawaiian Railway on the right, through the chain-link fence. ***By bus:*** From Waikiki, take 42 Ewa Beach to Waipahu Transit Center, and transfer to 431 Ewa Town Center.

An Heiress's Art-Filled Retreat

The newest major attraction in town, Doris Duke's **Shangri La** ✯✯✯ (meet at Honolulu Academy of Arts, 900 Beretania St.; ☎ 866/DUKE-TIX or 808/532-8700; www.shangrilahawaii.org; guided visits only, Wed–Sat beginning at 8:30am; last tour starts 1:30pm; adults $25, children under 12 not admitted; closed Sept, Jan 1, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25) has quickly become its most popular—and deservedly so. Book far in advance for this one; tours sell out and you don't want to miss this over-the-top mansion, which will delight on a number of levels. For good ol'-fashioned lowbrow fun, it affords visitors a peephole into the privileged existence of one of the 20th century's most famous heiresses: Doris Duke. And for a highbrow kick, you have one of the world's richest (and quirkiest) private collections of Islamic art housed in a stunningly beautiful complex of gardens, libraries, and dining halls, built and added to over the course of more than 60 years.

Opened to the public in 2003, Shangri La was tobacco heiress Doris Duke's oceanfront hideaway, which she built in 1937, inspired by her (first) honeymoon: a long tour through India, the Middle East, and Hawaii. She bought 5 acres in what is now a tony residential neighborhood known as Black Point, below Diamond Head. The building's facade is deceptively simple—white plaster walls with ceramic-tiled roof—but when you enter, the sensory overload is palpable. Every nook and cranny of the home has some kind of tile work or art from Spain, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, the Philippines, and China. Knowledgeable volunteer docents take you through each room, explaining the opulent decor and art, and telling amusing anecdotes about the eccentric owner (once good friends with Imelda Marcos), who died in 1993. A highlight is the Damascus Room. In the early 1950s, Duke bought the entire 17th-century interior of a Syrian home and installed it in Shangri La. It's lined with carved, painted, and gilded wood panels, and backlit vitrines hold delicate ceramics.

Asked when Shangri La was completed, Duke's longtime right-hand man, Sri Lankan Johnny Gomez, who still lives in Honolulu, says, "Never was finished, never. There was no such word as finished."

The academy was founded in 1927 by Anna Rice Cooke, a daughter of missionaries, who married Charles Montague Cooke, a wealthy son of missionaries. The art-collecting Cooke decided to tear down her grand wooden house and have it rebuilt as a public museum. (She built a new house on Maikiki Heights, which is now the Contemporary Museum.) The result is the handsomest building in town, a stucco hip-roofed island-style building designed by New York architect Bertram Goodhue. The museum has since had additional galleries built. One of the best lunch spots in town happens to be the academy's **Pavilion Café** (☎ 808/

532-8734), where chef Mike Nevin makes Mediterranean-leaning light bites and nothing costs more than $12. Reservations are a must.

While the Academy of Arts is the old-school art enclave, **The Contemporary Museum** ★ (2411 Makiki Heights Dr.; ☎ 808/562-0232; www.tcmhi.org; adults $5, students $3, free for children 12 and under) has the most exciting art programs in town, bringing in international stars such as Japan's Yoshitomo Nara and street artist Shepard Fairey for extended stays that include lectures at the University of Hawaii and parties at nightclubs. The museum has a collection of almost 2,000 works by artists such as Josef Albers, Sam Francis, and Jim Dine, but doesn't have the space to show it off. Its gallery is reserved for exhibitions, some curated in-house, others visiting. ***Highlight:*** David Hockney's permanent installation of his sets and costumes for the Ravel opera *L'enfant et les sortileges*—the room where it's housed cocoons you in blue, the walls alive with Hockney's whimsical red-trunked trees and flying creatures. Originally the home of Honolulu Academy of Arts creator Anna Rice Cooke, the museum's sloping green grounds are spectacular, and you'll usually see one or more pieces installed in the garden. There's also a popular cafe, where lunch is like a mini-getaway for Honolulu office workers. The museum's downtown satellite at the **First Hawaiian Bank Center** (999 Bishop St.), open weekdays only, shows works by local artists.

The state has been buying works by local artists since the 1970s, but it wasn't until 2002 that the collection of more than 5,000 pieces had a place to be seen. That's when the **Hawaii State Art Museum** ★ (250 S. Hotel St., at Richards St.; see map of Chinatown on p. 154; ☎ 808/586-0900; www.state.hi.us/sfca; free) opened in a palazzo-like building that was once a hotel, a YMCA for servicemen during World War II, and most recently a government office. Hawaii has a rich artistic history, and the semipermanent exhibition "Enriched by Diversity: The Art of Hawaii" has works by Hawaii's most prominent artists, running from the 1930s to the present. I'm mesmerized by the red abstract blur of "Cosmic Alchemy" by Isamu Doi, who led the way for a generation of Japanese-American artists such as Tadashi Sato, Toshiko Takaezu, Satoru Abe, and Harry Tsuchidana (whose work is also in this exhibit). The exhibition also includes Franco Salmoiraghi's portraits of native Hawaiians and Mark Hamasaki and Anne K. Landgraf's politically charged documentation of the controversial building of the H3 freeway. In the show, visitors get a taste of past island life in the photorealist watercolors by Doug Young—they are a potent nostalgia trip for residents. And it's all free.

If you've worked up an appetite, a few steps down Richards Street is a YWCA, home to the **Laniakea Café** (1040 Richards St.; ☎ 808/538-7061), where you can

Best Public Sculpture

Across the street from Kawaiahao Church is **Isamu Noguchi's *Sky Gate*** (see Downtown & Chinatown map on p. 154). Created in 1977, the 24-foot-tall tubular steel tripod, painted matte black, is a viewfinder to the heavens. On a clear night, people lie on the concrete platform under the sculpture and gaze up. Noguchi framed Hawaii's beautiful sky just for us.

get gourmet soups, sandwiches, and salads at reasonable prices. I especially like the burgers made from beef raised on the North Shore.

NATURAL OAHU

The hike up Honolulu's 750-foot-high iconic natural landmark, which is actually called Leahi by Hawaiians, isn't a pretty one—you walk up a dry, rocky trail in an arid crater—but the view from the top, at the **Diamond Head State Monument** ★, is the payoff. You can see the whole city, from the Hawaii Kai suburb to the east to Pearl Harbor (and beyond) to the west, lying like a snake between shore and mountain. Look out toward the ocean to see the horizon curve faintly and Molokai in the distance. The changing shades of blue as the water deepens are mesmerizing. The view is why the military bought Diamond Head in 1904, and 4 years later built gun emplacements, batteries, and the trail, among other things. Leahi is a sacred site for Hawaiians—it got its name, which means "brow of the ahi," from Hiiaka, sister of the fire goddess Pele, and Kamehameha I had a *heiau* (temple) built at the top.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the crater floor was the site of the annual Sunshine Festival, where bands such as Santana and Fleetwood Mac played, attracting up to 75,000 people. In 2006, a local promoter revived the tradition with the launch of the Diamond Head Crater Celebration (www.hawaiieventsonline.com). The Steve Miller Band, Linda Ronstadt, and War headlined.

By 10am it's hot up there, so get an early start, and you'll beat the busloads of tourists, too. The hike is fairly easy, but visitors who aren't fit may struggle up the 271 stairs. The entrance to the park is on the *mauka* side of the crater; to get there from Waikiki, take Kalakaua Avenue toward Kapiolani Park. At the park, make a left onto Monsarrat Avenue, which becomes Diamond Head Road after Campbell Avenue. Continue on Diamond Head Road to the turnoff for the crater. From Diamond Head Road, it's a half mile uphill to the park center, where there are snack trucks. To enter, it costs $5 per car and $1 per person on foot; the park is open from 6am to 6pm. TheBus: no. 22 or 58.

Kapi'olani Park ★ kids, 130 acres at the Diamond Head end of Waikiki, is where Honolulu goes to play. It has public tennis courts (get there early if you don't want to wait a long time), playing fields, an exercise station, a paved jogging path around its perimeter, bathroom facilities, and a bandstand where events such as the annual Ukulele Festival are held. Also in the park is my favorite music venue, the Waikiki Shell, a mini-Hollywood Bowl.

Whether you're a hard-core gardener and really into plants, a hiker, or simply interested in Hawaiian culture and want to see what a swatch of indigenous plant life looks like, stop at **Hoomaluhia Botanical Garden** ★ (45–680 Luluku Rd., Kaneohe; ☎ 808/233-7323; www.co.honolulu.hi.us/parks/hbg/hmbg.htm; Mon–Thurs 9am–4pm; free) on the Windward Side. (***Tip:*** It rains a lot over there, so take an umbrella.) The City & County of Honolulu oversees five botanical gardens, and the biggest is the 400-acre Hoomaluhia Botanical Garden in Kaneohe. Built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a flood buffer for Kaneohe, the garden, at the foot of the powerful Koolau mountain range, includes a 32-acre lake (you can borrow fishing poles from the visitor center). Divvied up into geographical sections, its trails wind through the flora of the Philippines, Hawaii, Africa, Sri Lanka, India, Polynesia, Melanesia, Malaysia, and tropical America. Volunteers give guided walks at 10am on Saturday and 1pm on Sunday (call to

A Valley Saved

In early 2006, Oahu residents held their breath while the City & County of Honolulu scrambled to come up with money to save the North Shore's magnificent Waimea Valley from New York investor Christian Wolffer, who wanted to build homes on 1,575 acres of the upper valley. In January, a deal was reached, and everyone breathed a sigh of relief. The valley is an *ahupuaa,* the traditional Hawaiian land division, sort of a pie slice of island that included everything a community needed to live, running from mountain down to ocean. Oahu's high priests called Waimea home for more than 600 years, making it an important spiritual zone. In the 1990s the valley was an adventure park with "jungle rides."

Today the area is owned by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and managed by the Audubon Society. It offers a lush walk into the past. The valley is packed with archaeological sites, including the 600-year-old Hale O Lono, a *heiau* (temple) dedicated to the Hawaiian god Lono, which you'll find to the left of the entrance to the **Waimea Valley Audubon Center** ★★ kids (59–854 Kamehameha Hwy.; ☎ 808/638-9199; $8 adults, $5 seniors, $5 children 4–12). The botanical collection has 35 different gardens, including super-rare Hawaiian species such as the endangered Kokia cookie hibiscus. The valley is also home to fauna such as the endangered Hawaiian moorhen; look for a black bird with a red face cruising in the ponds. Walk through the gardens (take the paved paths or dirt trails) and you wind up at 30-foot-high Waimea Falls—bring your bathing suit and you can dive into the cold, murky water. The center offers guided walks. On Tuesday and Saturday, you can take the 30-minute historical walk at 1pm, which includes a "talk story" session with *kupuna* (Hawaiian elders). A 30-minute native-Hawaiian-plant walk takes place Thursday and Sunday at 2pm. There are also events that feature hula and traditional Hawaiian games and crafts for kids; call to find out the schedule. There's a snack bar serving gourmet sandwiches, as well as a well-stocked gift shop selling Hawaiian crafts and books. Right across the street from Waimea Bay, you can combine a visit here with a couple of hours at the beach.

Driving directions: From Haleiwa, head west on Kamehameha Highway, turn right at the entrance, right across the street from Waimea Bay. TheBus: 52.

register). The tours are cool—the guides give you the lowdown on kooky plants, such as the lipstick tree, which yields a vibrant red ink, and pluck flowers and fruit for you to inspect and taste. Buy plate lunches in Kaneohe and have a picnic here. The garden also has campsites (p. 119).

If you're driving: From Honolulu, take H-1 to the Pali Hwy. (Hwy. 61); turn left on Kamehameha Hwy. (Hwy. 83); at the fourth light, turn left onto Luluku

Road. TheBus: No. 55 or 56 will stop on Kamehameha Hwy.; it's a 2-mile walk to the visitor center.

If you're used to mega Sea Worlds, **The Waikiki Aquarium** ★★★ kids (2777 Kalakaua Ave.; ☎ 808/923-9741; www.waquarium.org; daily 9am–4:30pm; $9 adults, $6 seniors, $4 youths 13–17, $2 kids 5–12) may look small and unassuming on the outside. But in reality, this little aquarium (part of the University of Hawaii) is a must-see research hotbed and the place to find out what's happening in all that water surrounding the island. The indoor-outdoor facility is right on the water, across the street from Kapi'olani Park. Indoors are four darkened galleries of illuminated tanks filled with everything from psychedelic reef fish to the rare chambered nautilus (the Waikiki Aquarium was the first aquarium in the U.S. to successfully breed this living fossil). The latest permanent exhibit is "Ocean Drifters," a living gallery of jellyfish. Outside are a number of other tanks, one holding a notable coral farm—few aquariums can grow coral, and this aquarium raises the stationary animals to send to other aquariums. Marine biologist Syd Kraul developed ways to raise mahimahi in the 1980s and you can see the result in the mahimahi hatchery. The "Edge of the Reef" exhibit re-creates the Oahu shoreline and tide pools. Don't even try to pull kids away from the pool of antic monk seals.

Another top spot for families is the **Nuuanu Pali Lookout** ★★ kids. Kids and grown-ups alike love leaning into the strong winds whipping through the famous cliff called Pali. Locals driving across Pali Highway often make a quick stop here just to catch the view—it's exhilarating. The thousand-foot cliff is where in 1795 Kamehameha I and his men cornered the warriors of Kalanikupule, the chief of Oahu, many of them falling to their deaths. When the old Pali Road to the lookout was built in 1898, workers found 800 skulls at the base of the cliff. Park in the lot and walk to the lookout, where you'll see the Windward Side of the island—Waimanalo, Kailua, and Kaneohe bays—stretched out below, and around you the craggy, fern-covered walls of the Koolau Mountains. The lookout is near the summit of Pali Highway (Hwy. 61); take the Nuuanu Pali Lookout turnoff.

CHINATOWN

The 15 blocks of Chinatown is where Honolulu feels like a real urban-grit city. Teeming with Asian markets run by Hawaii-born merchants and recent immigrants, Chinatown is where you can buy fresh, cheap produce, Chinese antiques, high-quality sashimi (it's where my grandmother gets her New Year's supply), and Hong Kong designer-bag knockoffs.

Hawaiian Online

Interested in the Hawaiian language? Now online is **www.ulukau.org,** an electronic Hawaiian library that includes a Hawaiian-English dictionary. Just type in the Hawaiian or English word you want to translate, and get the definition. The site is maintained by the organization Alu Like.

Oahu's Famous Tourist Trap

The **Polynesian Cultural Center** (55–370 Kamehameha Hwy., Laie; ☎ 800/367-7060 or 808/293-3333; www.polynesia.com; Mon–Sat noon–9pm; $50–$200 adults, $35–$150 kids 3–17) has always reminded me of Disney's saccharine "It's a Small World" boat ride. This one's just of Polynesia and with real, live people. There's a Hawaii section, a Tonga section, a New Zealand section—you get the idea. In these "villages," Polynesians (meant as a generic term since you may get a Hawaiian passing himself off as a Tahitian) do a presentation, perhaps a demo of how to hack open a coconut or how to make traditional tapa cloth, at designated times during the day. From 2:30 to 3pm every day, the Rainbows of Paradise pageant is held, which is actually a flotilla of Astroturf-topped rafts that make their way up a fake, stagnant river bearing a dance troupe from each of the island nations. Their costumes are Hollywood authentic.

As someone from Hawaii, I find the whole affair cheesy and heinous, a Disneyfied Polynesialand. But I will admit that it's for a good cause—owned by the Church of Latter Day Saints, the center is a giant fundraiser for education. The money goes to students attending the adjacent Brigham Young University campus. Most of the Polynesians serving you and dancing for you are Mormon college kids.

You can get packages that include the Alii Luau Feast, a buffet of pallid quasi-Hawaiian food that you share with a couple hundred other people, and the "Horizons: Where the Sea Meets the Sky" show, held in a 2,800-person theater, with fire dancers, hula dancers, and the like. Of course, you'd have a more authentic (and cheaper) Polynesian experience by going to the Bishop Museum (p. 141) and then having dinner at Ono Hawaiian Foods (p. 129) in Kapahulu.

The first Chinese arrived on two ships in 1788, and the seed of Chinatown was planted. When the first Chinese plantation contract laborers arrived in 1852, the neighborhood really got going. By 1884, there were 5,000 Chinese in Honolulu, and the 25 acres of Chinatown bustled with tongs (clubhouses), herb shops, restaurant, temples, and stores. Today, those things are still here, along with some of the hottest nightspots in town.

There are two good organized walking tours of Chinatown. For a general tour that covers history and culture, go on the 3-hour version offered by **Hawai'i Heritage Center** (meet at Ramsay Museum, 1128 Smith St.; ☎ 808/521-2749; Wed and Fri at 9:30am; $10). Personally, I prefer to explore with my tongue, so I'd recommend food writer Anthony Chang's 2-hour **Culinary Tour of Chinatown** (meet at Chinese Chamber of Commerce, 42 N. King St., second floor; Mon 9:30am; ☎ 808/533-3181; $10). Chang knows the neighborhood intimately and takes you to places like the Ying Leong look-fun factory, where you sample the silky rice noodles with barbecued pork. At produce stalls, he gives you the lowdown on

fruits like the dimpled litchi and hairy rambutan (they're cousins). At the Chee Wo Tong herbal shop (the oldest one in Chinatown), Chang will tell you how herbalists once played a prominent role in traditional Chinese cuisine. At Char Hung Sut, you get to taste *manapua,* steamed buns filled with fragrant *char siu* (sweet barbecued pork). The low fee includes these samples and snacks.

To explore the area on your own, you can download a free walking map at **www.chinatownhi.com** that has all the major landmarks and insider spots.

The pride of Chinatown is the recently restored 1922 **Hawaii Theatre** (1130 Bethel St.; ☎ 808/528-0506; www.hawaiitheatre.com), often called the Carnegie Hall of the Pacific. The grand Beaux Arts building is where you can see everything from top local musicians to visiting acts like the musical *Stomp.* The Hawaii International Film Festival has its premieres here, too.

Six blocks away is the bustling open-air **Oahu Market** (the corner of N. King and Kekaulike sts.; ☎ 808/841-6924), where vendors sell caught-that-day fish, roasted pork, and other edibles. Opened in 1922, it's still a major food hub for locals.

Maunakea Marketplace (1120 Maunakea St.; ☎ 808/524-3409) is the other big fresh-food center. In the courtyard are stalls selling Chinese trinkets and clothing. Inside, you'll find a food court of stalls selling prepared Singaporean, Vietnamese, Thai, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino food. When I'm in the neighborhood, I stop for a curry at **Malee Thai/Vietnamese Cuisine,** or grab a bento box at the adjacent **Masa's.**

THE OTHER OAHU

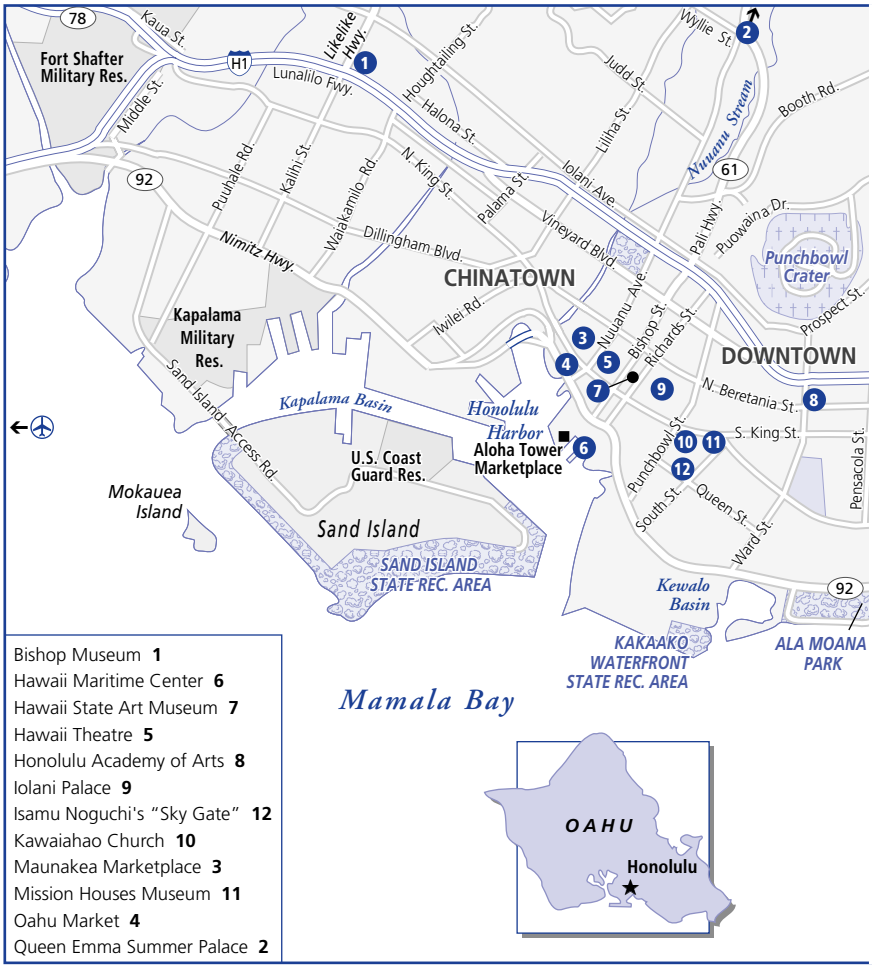
As is true of any vacation destination, there can be an invisible "us" and "them" barrier between visitor and resident on Oahu. Here are the insider tips on where the locals go, whether it's shopping at a farmers market or meditating in a Korean Buddhist temple tucked in the back of a valley. Tourists are rarely in sight.

A good place to get a taste of **local culture** is **Diamond Head Cove Health Bar** (3045 Monsarrat Ave.; ☎ 808/732-8044). By day it's a casual lunch-and-smoothie spot—owner Marcus Marcos makes delicious salads and burritos with fish he catches himself—but in the evening it turns into an *awa* (or *kava*, as it's known in Fiji and in diet supplements) bar. It's a nightly party, with jam sessions and banter. People like virtuoso guitarist Makana sometimes drop by. Surfboards and art hang on the walls as people perch at the few small tables and at the counter, drinking *awa* from paper bowls and munching on snacks.

The old Polynesian tradition of drinking *awa* is making a comeback in Honolulu. *Awa* is made from the plant's root and mixed with water. *Warning:* Don't drink *awa* if you've had alcohol (you'll get an upset stomach). The liquid has an earthy flavor and lightly numbs the lips, eventually yielding a floaty feeling after a couple of bowls.

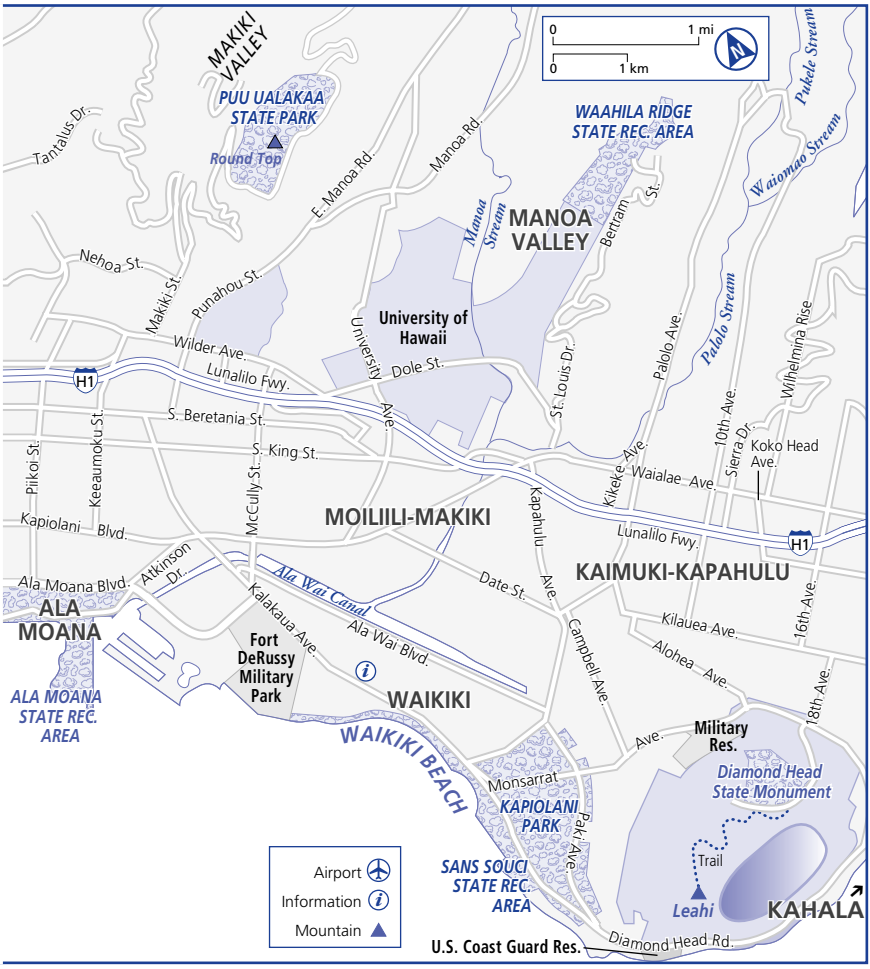
Started in 2003 by local food writer Joan Namkoong and the Hawaii Farm Bureau Federation as a single **Farmers Market at Kapi'olani Community College** (4303 Diamond Head Rd.; www.hfbf.org/FarmersMarketKCC.html; free), across from the entrance to Diamond Head State Monument, the program has been so successful it now has three markets. The main one is still the original, which happens every Saturday from 7:30 to 11am. While I don't expect visitors to stock up on the great organic produce (vine-ripened tomatoes from the North Shore, arugula from Waianae), the market also has **food booths and good gifts** that you

Downtown & Chinatown



Bishop Museum **1**
Hawaii Maritime Center **6**
Hawaii State Art Museum **7**
Hawaii Theatre **5**
Honolulu Academy of Arts **8**
Iolani Palace **9**
Isamu Noguchi's "Sky Gate" **12**
Kawaiahao Church **10**
Maunakea Marketplace **3**
Mission Houses Museum **11**
Oahu Market **4**
Queen Emma Summer Palace **2**

won't find in any department store. Each week, a selected vendor makes a breakfast special, and other regulars sell fried green tomatoes, *lumpia* (like spring rolls), beignets, burgers, and Japanese plate lunches. Before going on trips, I like to stock up on gifts of Made in Hawaii jams, honey from the Hawaiian Beekeepers' Association, spice rubs from Kaiulani's Spices, and PacifiKool's ginger syrup, made from Big Island ginger. PacifiKool owner Cheryl To also makes fresh ginger ale at her booth, and it's the best I've ever tasted—she's made fans of visitors from Australia to France. To check specials and see who'll be in the lineup, go to the website. The no. 3, 22, and 58 buses stop here. The other markets are in Kailua (behind Longs on Kailua Rd.; Thurs 5–7:30pm) and Mililani (Mililani High School, 95–1200 Meheula Pkwy.; Sun 8am–noon).



Jazz thrives in Honolulu, with young bands finding homes at the hot nightspots. But hard-core fans and musicians go to the **Hawaii Musicians' Union** (949 Kapiolani Blvd., entrance on Waimanu St., second floor; ☎ 808/596-2905; http://www.livemusicbiz.com/now.htm; $7) on Tuesday at 8pm for its weekly Studio 6 live-music night. Here you can hear top local talent such as saxophonist Gabe Baltazar and trumpeter DeShannon Higa play for their peers. It's a no-frills room—it's all about the music.

The **visual-arts scene** is concentrated in Chinatown, with galleries by established artists such as Pegge Hopper and newcomers like Bethel Street Gallery. In 2003 the community, led by nonprofit group **ARTS at Marks Garage** (1159 Nuuanu Ave.; ☎ 808/521-2903; www.artsatmarks.com; free), banded together to

launch First Fridays, a gallery walk that runs from 5 to 9pm on the first Friday of each month. Now hundreds of people roam the blocks, looking at paintings, stopping in at events, shopping (many stores and other businesses stay open for the event), and eating at one of the many restaurants in the area. Want to meet some local creative types? This is the place to go. Walking maps are available at ARTS at Marks Garage.

Hiking is popular on Oahu, which is riddled with valley-to-mountain trails. A good way to go is with the local chapter of the **Sierra Club** (☎ 808/538-6616; www.hi.sierraclub.org; $5), which organizes group hikes led by certified guides who are knowledgeable about local plant life. To go a step further, sign on for a day project and help restore a trail or clear an area being developed into a park. It's a great way to rub elbows with locals who really care about the island, and do something for the place you're visiting. Sierra Club hikes all over the island, from right in Honolulu to the far reaches of sleepy Hauula. Participants meet at 8am at the back porch of **Church of the Crossroads** (2510 Bingham St.), which is near the University of Hawaii. Call ahead to sign up for **hikes and day projects;** you'll find the hike schedule and descriptions on the website.

Honolulu is home to a lot of bad community theater that dredges up old musicals. But we have one saving grace: **Kumu Kahua Theatre** (46 Merchant St.; ☎ 808/536-4441; www.kumukahua.org; $16). Its mission is to produce plays by local writers about local life. If a Lee Cataluna play is on stage during your visit, go. The spunky columnist of the *Honolulu Advertiser* writes works that are half humor, half social commentary. Her biggest hit has been *Folks You Meet at Longs.* Longs is the Walgreens of Hawaii, and everyone goes there. The cast of characters—cashiers and customers—will give you a good idea of prototypical Hawaii residents and their foibles. Housed in an 1871 building that was originally a post office—and the first building in the country made with precast concrete block and steel reinforcement—this 100-seat theater sells out fast.

For a **day on the water,** like a lot of locals, I kayak to the **Mokulua Islands** (called the Mokes for short) off of Lanikai Beach. The bay is a big blue expanse filled with sea turtles, and, in good conditions, the 2-mile round-trip paddle to the twin islands (the one on the left a sanctuary for blue-footed boobies) is pretty easy. On a windy day, though, I don't recommend it for first-timers. I don't kayak often enough to invest in my own vessel, so when I get the urge, I go to **Kailua Sailboards & Kayaks** (Kailua Beach Center, 130 Kailua Rd.; ☎ 808/262-2555; www.kailuasailboards.com), a 2-minute walk from the beach. The trip takes 1 to 1½ hours one-way, so be sure to pack some water and perhaps a snack with you in a dry bag. Staff will fill you in on the journey so that you can navigate on your own (a single kayak is $49 for a day, doubles are $59), or you can take a guided tour ($89 includes transportation from Waikiki and lunch). If you go on your own, you'll tow your kayak to the beach on a dolly, drag it over the sand into the water, and take off. You're in the open ocean, passing over reefs, yet always in sight of land. When you're done and blissfully worn out, reward yourself with a shaved ice (snow cone) at **Island Snow** a few doors down. I like the *lilikoi* (passion fruit) syrup the best.

For a taste of a backyard ***kanikapila***—when musicians get together and jam Hawaiian-style—head to the weekly **Sunday jam at the Koolau Golf Club** (45–550 Kionaole Rd.; ☎ 808/247-7088; www.koolaugolfclub.com; no cover) in Kaneohe. Slack-key guitarist Mike Kaawa is the regular headliner, but he's always

joined by old-school legends like ukulele master Eddie Kamae and Analu Aina (who played bass for Israel Kamakawiwoole). The party happens from 3:30 to 7:30pm. You'll be sitting with real-deal old-timers, eating pupus like *poke* (cubed ahi in soy sauce) and *mochiko* chicken (breaded in rice flour and fried) and throwing back the beers.

Waimea Valley, now an **Audubon Center** (59–864 Kamehameha Hwy.; ☎ 808/638-9199; $5), is a sacred spot, and on the center's **monthly moonwalk,** you can really feel the mana. Held on the Friday closest to the full moon, the 1½-hour walk, led by experts on the botanical garden's prize plants, attracts locals who want a glimpse of rare night-blooming flowers. Bring a flashlight and be there at 7:30pm. The entrance to the valley is across the street from Waimea Bay.

Gregory Pai, a former chief economist for First Hawaiian Bank, is a longtime student of famed Burmese Buddhist monk Sayaew U Kundala. He passes on his teachings at a free **Vipassana meditation class** every Saturday at the **Mu Ryang Sa Korean temple** (2420 Halelaau Place; gpai@lava.net) in Palolo. The grand, ornate temple alone is worth a visit. The sittings are held in the Memorial Hall, where you'll see a lavish altar and photographs of the dead who have had services there. Take off your shoes before entering, grab a pillow, and make yourself comfortable on the cranberry-colored carpet. Pai welcomes beginners and seasoned meditators alike. Pai talks participants through to "the point where you're not constantly editorializing or judging; you are at a point of pure awareness," he says. After an hour, whether you reach epiphany or not, you feel calm and relaxed. And maybe you'll make some enlightened friends. To get to the temple, coming from town on Waialae Avenue, turn left on 10th Avenue, drive all the way to the back of the temple, and turn right on Halelaau Place. Although the sitting is free, a small donation is welcome.

ACTIVE OAHU

by Dave Dondoneau

Like so many new islanders, I moved to Oahu with visions of becoming a beach bum—learning to surf and scuba dive, then soaking up rays on a carpet of sand. But once I got to Oahu, I realized I had just scratched the surface. There's more to do here than I ever imagined: skydiving, hiking, golfing, you name it. In the pages that follow, I'll discuss the island's outstanding and most rewarding active sports, with tips on how to make the most of your time—and save money, too.

WATERSPORTS

Oahu is surrounded by the largest ocean on earth, and residents make use of it. From night snorkeling at Hanauma Bay to kiteboarding at Kailua Beach, the options are limitless.

THE MOST FAMOUS SPORT: SURFING

Hawaii is synonymous with surfing and Oahu is the best island to learn this sport. The gentlest, most forgiving waves on the planet are at **Waikiki** (which is also why it's so crowded), and the board's-eye view of the coastline from here is unmatchable. In Honolulu, the easiest (and most crowded) break is **Canoes,** right off Kuhio Beach. But if you're above average in talent, try **Cliffs,** at the base of

Water Safety

Ninety-nine percent of the tourists seem to be aware of water-related precautions, but there always seem to be a few yahoos who come to Oahu thinking they've gone to Disneyland and all rides are safe. The ocean is not. This isn't an island that's going to knock you over the head with tons of warning signs, but if you see a sign on the beach that says DANGER: HIGH SURF or JELLYFISH WARNING or SHARK SIGHTING—pay attention or pay the price.

Diamond Head, where the waves are in the 4-to-6-foot range. Seasoned surfers will want to visit Hawaii in the winter, from December to March. This is the time when the North Shore gets its legendary 20-foot-high waves, transforming Oahu into the surf capital of the world.

Beach stands where you can rent a surfboard ($10/hour on average) are set up all along Waikiki, from the Hilton Hawaiian Village to Kapiolani Park. If you plan on surfing and renting from a beach stand, don't bring extra cash or credit cards. The beach stands will hold your valuables, but their assistance is at your own risk. With so much traffic on the Waikiki beaches, wallets and valuables can easily "walk off" while you're enjoying the surf.

If you're a beginner, take a surf lesson—for instruction but also, and maybe most important, for protection against the other clueless people wielding potentially lethal long boards. Most schools schedule 1- to 2-hour classes for beginners. That may not seem like a long time, but until your body is used to paddling out to the waves, an hour can feel like an eternity. And remember, the bigger the board, the easier it is to stand up. Another important thing instructors teach is surf etiquette—where to paddle out to the break, when to get out of the way of other surfers and take your turn. Most surf schools guarantee they can get you up and surfing by the end of your 1- or 2-hour session, which makes it a can't-miss activity.

Hans Hedemann Surf School ★ (2863 Kalakaua Ave., Waikiki; ☎ 808/924-7778; www.hhsurf.com) is the most professional operation in Waikiki. Run by former 1970s pro surfer Hans Hedemann, this school has four Waikiki locations and another at Turtle Bay Resort on the North Shore. Hedemann himself gives private lessons—at $250 for an hour. (He has taught celebrities such as Cameron Diaz and Adam Sandler.) If the expenditure is beyond your budget, go for a $50 1-hour group lesson (maximum four people) with a CPR-certified seasoned surf instructor. Instructors take would-be surfers through a brief on-land training exercise (where to position yourself on the board, how to stand up), then out to surf breaks just off the Waikiki Aquarium and Natatorium.

C&K Beach Services ★ (in front of the Hilton Hawaiian Village at the beginning of Waikiki; no telephone; $50 for a 1-hr. lesson) is a more modest operation than Hans Hedemann's Surf School, but this end of the beach has fewer people, and the instructors are a kind lot, particularly 50-something Dennis Sambrano, an encouraging, gentle instructor who guarantees he'll get you standing on your board (plus he looks like famed surfer Duke Kahanamoku, although he's actually Mexican). At this spot, you have to paddle further to get to the waves, but they're less crowded than at Kuhio Beach.

Waikiki beach itself is lined with **beach-boy kiosks** staffed by local guys who know Waikiki like the backs of their hands and offer the cheapest private lessons (about $25 an hour). There are a few old-timers who actually surfed with Kahanamoku way back when, such as Blue Makua, Jr., who works for **Aloha Beach Service** (in front of the Sheraton Moana Surfrider; ☎ 808/922-3111). The quality of service at these stands varies wildly; some of them are manned by bored, inattentive surf rats who aren't thrilled to be answering tourists' questions all day. Or you might luck out and get an old Hawaiian grandfather who likes nothing better than to get someone to stand up on their board even after 40 years of working on the beach. At these prices, you just have to, as we say in Hawaii, chance 'em.

Friendly, soulful Suzy Stewart of **Sunset Suzy** ★★ (☎ 808/781-2692; www.sunsetsuzy.com; $65 each for a group of up to three students for 2-hr., $75 each for two people for 2-hr., $85 for 2-hr. private lesson) gives surfing lessons with a feminine touch, but she's no softy—she was a stuntwoman on *Baywatch.* (She also appeared in *Blue Crush.*) Stewart specializes in beginners, and offers a bunch of different packages, including a weeklong women's surf camp for $1,350 that includes accommodations (but not airfare). She starts beginners off at gentle Alii Beach Park in Haleiwa, on the North Shore.

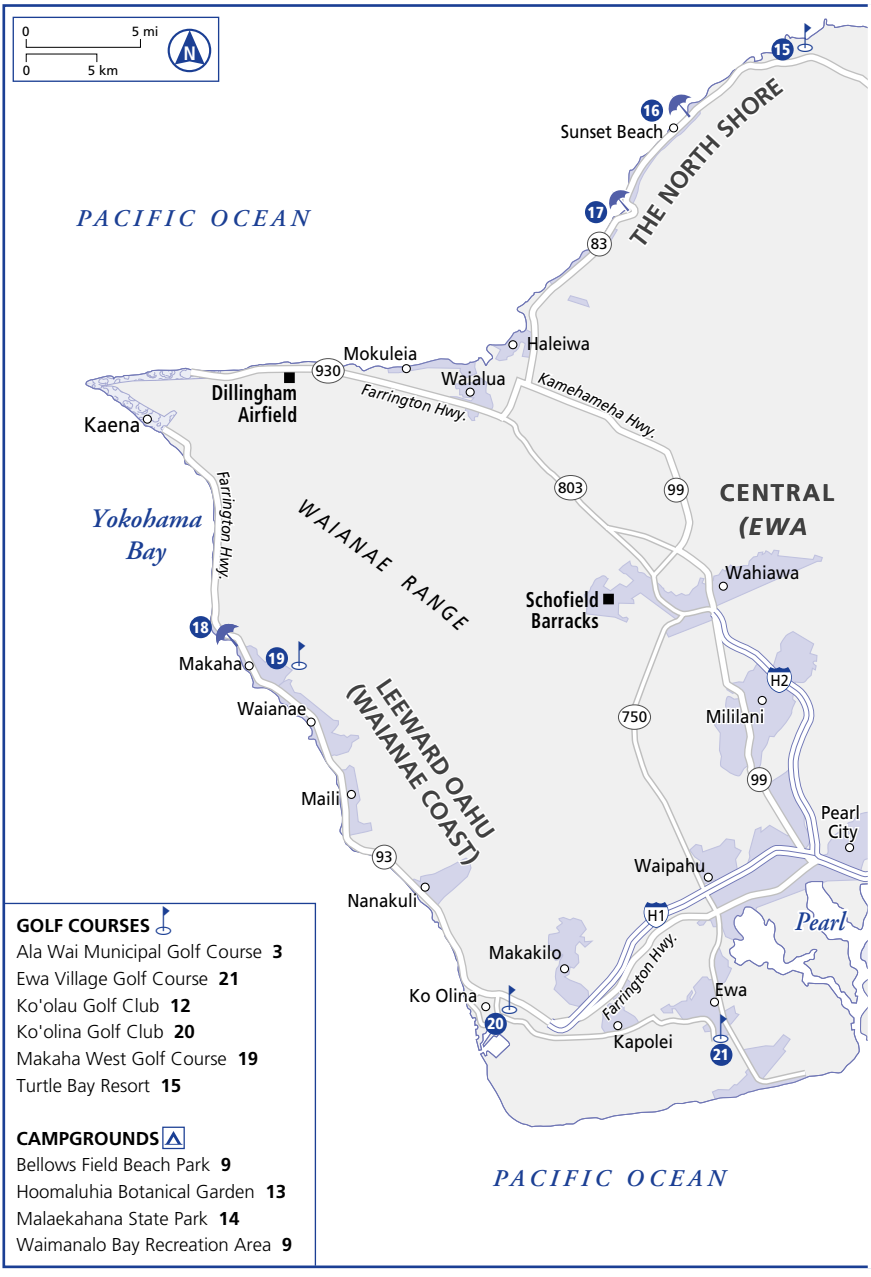
Who knows safety better than a fireman? Local firefighters—who also happen to be good surfers—are the instructors at **Hawaiian Fire** ★ (3318 Campbell Ave.; ☎ 808/737-3473; www.hawaiianfire.com). While their prices are a little higher than the competition, the payoff is the location—they transport clients out to Kalaeloa Beach at Barbers Point, about 40 minutes from Waikiki, where you don't have to fight for a wave. Adult private lessons cost $139, adult group lesson (maximum three people) are $97, and children's private lessons are $119.

At **Surf Hawaii Surf School** ★★ kids (North Shore Marketplace, second floor; ☎ 808/295-1241; www.surfhawaii4u.com, edison@surfhawaii4u.com; $130 for a 3-hr. private lesson, $100 each for two people for 3 hr., $75 each for group), you can feel safe in the charge of owner Edison De Paulo—he's a lifeguard and well-known big-wave tow-in surfer. Although Brazilian-born De Paulo specializes in private instruction, his team of instructors also gives group lessons for up to five people. Instructors are great with kids and surf tandem with them. Beginners are taken to Puena Point, where waves can break up to 20 feet on the outside, but 1- to 3-foot breaks run into a protected minibay, which is good for beginners. De Paulo was a lifeguard at the North Shore's two most famous surf spots—Waimea Bay and the Banzai Pipeline—and surfs notorious big-wave spots such as Jaws on Maui. Surf Hawaii also offers surf tours for experienced surfers. For $100, you can get an edited video (includes soundtrack) of you on the waves.

WINDSURFING

The best place on the island to hone windsurfing skills is **Kailua Bay.** On any given day, you'll see experts and first-timers gliding over the water. **Hawaiian Water Sports** (354 Hahani St., Kailua; ☎ 808/262-5483; www.hawaiianwatersports.com) offers a shuttle service from Waikiki hotels for $10 per person. The pickup is at 8:30am and they'll have you back between 4 and 6:30pm. Advanced sailors head to **Diamond Head** to jump the waves. If you're on the North Shore, **Haleiwa Harbor** is also a haven for windsurfers.

Beaches & Outdoor Pursuits on Oahu



GOLF COURSES

Ala Wai Municipal Golf Course **3**
Ewa Village Golf Course **21**
Ko'olau Golf Club **12**
Ko'olina Golf Club **20**
Makaha West Golf Course **19**
Turtle Bay Resort **15**

CAMPGROUNDS

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Hoomaluhia Botanical Garden **13**
Malaekahana State Park **14**
Waimanalo Bay Recreation Area **9**

BEACHES
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Ehukai Beach Park 16
Hanauma Bay 5
Kailua Beach Park 11
Kuilei Cliffs Beach Park 4
Lanikai Beach 10
Makaha 18
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Heeia
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H1
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Honolulu Int. Airport
Honolulu
Punchbowl Crater
H1
Makiki
Manoa Valley
EAST OAHU
Niniz Hwy.
Hawaii Kai
Honolulu Harbor
Waikiki
SANDY BEACH PARK
Diamond Head Crater
Kapiolani Park
Koko Head
Hanauma Bay

Broadcasting the Waves

To find out where the surf's up, call the Surf News Network Surfline at ☎ 808/596-SURF.

Unless you're a really serious windsurfer, you're not likely to bring a sail and rig with you on holiday. Not to worry: There are outfits that rent out all the gear you need, from car racks to sails. Here are the two best:

Visitors new to the sport can learn it from Hawaii's oldest windsurfing operation—**Naish Hawaii** (155a Hamakua Dr., Kailua; ☎ 808/262-6068; www.naish.com), owned by former world champion Robbie Naish and his parents. Naish Hawaii has been producing windsurf boards since the early 1980s, and it rents gear and gives lessons, too. For diehard sailors, the company can customize a windsurfing vacation, even finding accommodations for you in Kailua. Private lessons are $75 and group lessons are $45 per person. Rental prices: $25 for 2 hours or $35 for a full day for beginner-level sail and rig; $35 for a half day or $40 for a full day for intermediate-level sail and rig; $40 for half day or $55 for full day for advanced-level sail and rig.

The other top-flight Kailua operation is **Hawaiian Water Sports** (354 Hahani St., Kailua; ☎ 808/262-5483; www.hawaiianwatersports.com). On the teaching staff are pros Pascal Bronniman and Josh Seymour, who combine competition-level skills with patient teaching expertise. Hawaiian Water Sports offers three types of lessons: a 2-hour group lesson for $89, a 2-hour private lesson for $129, and an all-day windsurfing lesson and experience for $299. Beginning lessons start at Kailua Beach Park, while more experienced sailors go to Diamond Head.

KITEBOARDING

This relatively new sport—a combination of wakeboarding, windsurfing, and acrobatics—is physically grueling and challenging. Kailua Bay is the epicenter for kiteboarding, as the wind is always blowing there, but the water's fairly calm. Windsurfer Robbie Naish is a recent convert to kiteboarding, and his shop **Naish Hawaii** ★ (155a Hamakua Dr., Kailua; ☎ 808/262-6068; www.naish.com) has become the best outpost for would-be daredevils. As with windsurfing, private lessons are $75 and group lessons $45 per person.

Another top school is **Aloha Kiteboarding Academy** (66–250 Kam Hwy., Haleiwa; ☎ 888/924-KITE or 808/637-5483). Head instructor Andy Heaton places an emphasis on safety at this North Shore school, which is important in a sport that uses gear with lines and a harness. The fee here for a private 2-hour lesson is $99 and you can add a friend into the lesson for an additional $50.

SNORKELING

While Oahu doesn't have the brilliant underwater gardens of waving, multihued soft corals one finds in places such as Indonesia and Fiji, snorkeling is still a great experience here. Around Oahu, the clear water is home to many types of hard corals—white, black, and pink—that harbor reef fish, sea urchins, eels, octopuses,

and lots of other sea life. The more remote the spot, the more fish you'll see. If you snorkel on the west shore during the winter months, you can sometimes hear whales singing, too.

Warning: Barracuda and other predatory fish are attracted to shiny objects, so take off your wedding ring and the like before snorkeling. It doesn't happen often, but barracuda will bite at rings. Fingers included.

If you have only one chance to snorkel, make a beeline for **Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve** ★★★ (7455 Kalaniana'ole Hwy.; ☎ 808/396-4229; www.co.honolulu.hi.us/parks/facility/hanaumabay; Wed–Mon 6am–6pm, Apr–Oct 6am–7pm; $5). More than three million people—visitors and tourists, absolute beginners, and seasoned divers—visit the preserve each year. The remnant of a volcanic crater, the crescent of sand here is fronted by a shallow reef that simply teems with sea life. In sandy pockets, you'll spot butterflyfish, damselfish, wrasses, sea turtles (I followed one around last time I went), and other marine life. When you arrive, stop first at the visitor center on the ridge above the beach. After paying, you'll enter a theater to watch a mandatory 10-minute video about Hanauma Bay and how to be an eco-friendly snorkeler (no stepping on the coral, for instance). The video is shown every 15 minutes and there are informative interactive displays on beach history to browse if you need to wait. Locals tend to bring picnics, but there's a snack bar outside the visitor center. On the beach are full bathroom facilities and a snorkel-rental kiosk ($6 for snorkel kit, $5 for dive lights).

A word of caution: Parking is a problem. Get to the preserve early to find a spot, or you're going to have to park on the road outside and walk to the park—more than a mile each way. One way to avoid the crowds is to go on the second Saturday of each month, when the park is open until 10pm for night dives. The reef is luminous under the beam of your flashlight.

If you're driving from Honolulu: Take H-1 East and it runs into Kalaniana'ole Highway. It's about 10 miles from Waikiki, all through towns, so it can be slow getting there. ***By bus:*** No. 22 stops right in front of Hanauma Bay.

While Hanauma Bay is the best spot for beginners, and a sort of one-stop shop for a snorkeling experience, a hidden gem is the area just off where the boats are parked on the shore of **Lanikai Beach** (p. 136). The water is crystal clear and the reefs are so close to shore, you don't have to worry about going out too deep before seeing clown fish, eels, and other fish. On the Waianae Coast, the Makaha area has some great snorkeling and scuba spots. You can see dolphins at **Makua Beach** (p. 137), where there are also a lot of small caves to explore. In the winter, you may hear whales singing. All three beaches offer free public access, but you'll have to bring your own drinking water and snacks. There are no restaurants on these beaches. Restrooms are available at Makaha and Makua, but not at Lanikai.

To rent snorkel gear, try one of the following options.

- **Aloha Dive Shop** (Koko Marina Shopping Center; ☎ 808/395-5922; www.alohadiveshop.com) is the closest dive shop to the underwater park at Hanauma Bay.
- **Snorkel Bob's** ★ kids (700 Kapahulu Ave.; ☎ 808/735-7944; www.snorkelbob.com) is at the edge of Waikiki, on the way to Hanauma Bay. It's a chain with shops all around the islands, so if you're island hopping, you can rent gear on Oahu and drop it off on, say, Maui. Snorkel Bob's has a budget-crunch

rental special of $9 a week for snorkel, standard mask, and fins (adults only). Snorkel-rental packages go on up to $44 a week for higher-end gear.

- **Kailua Sailboards & Kayaks** (130 Kailua Rd.; ☎ 808/262-2555), on the Windward Side, charges $48 per week for rentals and leads snorkel trips.
- **Surf-N-Sea** kids (62–595 Kamehameha Hwy., Haleiwa; ☎ 808/637-9887; www.surfnsea.com) is the place to go on the North Shore. You can rent a set of mask, fins, and snorkel for $9.50 a day or $45 a week. Surf-N-Sea also gives 2-hour snorkeling tours for $45 per person, and if you're a family of three or more the cost is $40 per person.

SCUBA DIVING

Oahu has shipwrecks and plane wrecks, plus dolphins and whales, in its waters. It's a superb place for those into wreck diving (you can see the sunken 185-foot minesweeper *Mahi* just south of Waianae) and just as good for those into wildlife spotting (a spectacular area is the Kahuna Canyon, a massive and natural underwater amphitheater, home to dozens of species). Experienced divers will want to head to the Waianae Coast, where visibility is high and whales abundant (Dec–Apr). But wherever you end up, you're guaranteed to see something worthwhile; there are more than 200 species that are found only in Hawaiian waters.

Oahu's best dives are offshore, so you're going to want to book a two-tank dive from a dive boat. Of the many companies on the island, my favorite is **Captain Bruce's Hawaii Extreme Comfort Diving** (718 10th Ave.; ☎ 800/535-2487 or 808/373-3590; www.captainbruce.com; $110). Most scuba and tour businesses follow strict schedules for their dives, but owners Randy and Suzette Farnum determine what sites to dive to by where the best conditions are. They also go out of their way to make clients feel like family. They operate on the Waianae Coast, which has lava tubes to swim in, but the real benefit to diving in this area is that you can hear—and see—whales from December through April. For $110, the Farnums will pick you up in Waikiki, feed you on the boat, and show you the best diving on Oahu. Some days, they'll take you to the Mahi Shipwreck, a 1942 mine sweeper that went down 24 years ago in about 90 feet of water. Other diving spots are Airplane Canyon, just outside Waianae Harbor, and the Makaha Taverns, where sea turtles congregate. Average visibility is about 80 to 100 feet. On a bad day, it's 50 feet.

If you're strapped for time, you can still get some decent diving done right off Waikiki with **Dive Oahu** (1085 Ala Moana Blvd.; ☎ 808/922-3483; www.dive

A Fishy Guide

Make the most of your snorkeling experience and spend $5 at local snorkel shops for **Franko's Oahu Reef Creatures Guide** or another fish card. Franko's card has pictures of all the fish you can expect to see when you bob your head down, along with the names of the coral, shells, eels, and plants. Laminated, you can take the card underwater with you, and it's always cool to compare notes with your family or friends when you come up for air. Make a game of who spots the most fish, with the loser buying a plate lunch at the Rainbow Drive-In (p. 123).

Marine Biology 101

To learn about what you're seeing, rather than just ogling the undersea world, sign up with **Wild Side Specialty Tours** (Slip #A11, Waianae Boat Harbor, Waianae; ☎ 808/877-1222; $75). Its marine biologists lead you on "wildlife charters" and reef surveys—catamaran tours that include snorkel sessions—to areas full of sea turtles and other sea life. The education is well worth the price.

oahu.com; $99–$129). Certified divers will dive the same Corsair shipwreck and reef that the submarine rides tour, going down about 100 feet, where you'll find white-tip reef sharks, an occasional hammerhead, sea turtles, and reef fish. Noncertified divers watch an instructional DVD and take onshore instruction, then head with an instructor to the **Turtle Canyon** reef about 4 minutes from the shipwreck. They descend about 30 feet by the end of their training. If you don't want to scuba dive but your friend does, you can tag along on the boat and catch some sun for about $35. Dives begin at 8am and return around noon. Afternoon dives go from 1 to 4pm. For a 20% discount, book online.

BOATING & WHALE-WATCHING

December to April is humpback-whale season in Hawaii, when the giants migrate down from Alaska to breed and give birth. The whales are a protected species, so tour boats are supposed to stay a couple of hundred yards away, but savvy tour operators kill the engines when they spot humpbacks and let the whales come to them. When they do, it's an experience you'll never forget. The whales don't seem to be bothered by the boats. Sometimes, they'll even brush up against them. When the behemoths surface near you and blow, breach, or dive, you'll be hooked on watching them and amazed by their size and how they move.

Marine biologists are aboard the catamarans of **Sail Hawaii** ★★ kids (Waianae Boat Harbor, A11; ☎ 808/306-7273; www.sailhawaii.com), and their expertise makes this tour the most educational one offered. Specializing in whale-watching and snorkel tours, a 4-hour sail that includes snorkeling is a reasonable $95 per person. A 2-hour afternoon reef snorkel is $75, or you can rent the boat and crew as private charters for $350 an hour for up to 10 people. Sail Hawaii, which also runs Wildside Specialty Tours, is one of the best boating values because you get more time on and in the water.

If you're looking for a smooth ride close to Waikiki, the ***Navatek 1*** (Pier 6, Aloha Tower Marketplace; ☎ 808/973-1311; www.navatek.us) offers a whale-watch lunch cruise for $58 ($39 for children 2–12). Better known for its night-time "booze cruises," the 380-passenger *Navatek* is a catamaran and the flagship of the Royal Hawaiian Cruises Fleet.

If you love sailing, or just want a surfer's-eye view of Oahu, take a ride on a catamaran with **Hawaii Nautical** (Ko'Olina Resort and Marina, 92–1480 Aliinui Dr., Ko Olina; ☎ 808/234-SAIL; www.hawaiinautical.com), which offers 3-hour sails (that include snorkeling) for $100 ($84 for kids 4–11). The company also gives 1-day sailing lessons, ranging from $350 for basic keelboat sailing to $400

for catamaran cruising. Short on time or cash? The **Maita'i Catamaran** (☎ 808/922-5665; www.leahi.com) offers a sunset sail off of Waikiki Beach. The $34 trip ($17 for children 4–12), including drinks, is just what it says—set off at 5pm, grab a mai tai, and sail until the sun goes down (about 6 to 6:30pm depending on time of year).

SPORT FISHING

The Big Island's Kona Coast may be Hawaii's sport-fishing mecca, but Oahu gets its share of line-fighting fish. Once at Kewalo Basin, I saw four seniors—all women—posing with a 300-pound blue marlin they had reeled in together on their excursion. The charters here may not always get you a marlin, but they always seem to bring back something. The North Shore is where you can reel in yellowfin tuna. Other fish to land: skipjack tuna (aku), mahimahi, and wahoo (ono). Chasing marlins and other big-game fish isn't cheap. Of course, if you happen to land a 350-pound marlin and you're back at the dock taking a photo alongside it, it might feel like a worthy splurge.

Many sport-fishing boats are based in the Kewalo Basin, next to the Ala Moana Park and across from Ward Centre, and captained by experienced seafarers who love fishing. All are safe, dependable operations.

A sport-fishing charter is rated on one thing: Did you catch fish? And the one operator with whom you will most reliably reel something in is **Maggie Joe Sportfishing** ★★★ (Kewalo Basin, slip J; ☎ 877/806-3474 or 808/591-8888; private full day $900–$975, private half day $700–$750, shared full day $190, shared half day $150, for up to six people). The family-owned business is Oahu's oldest charter-fishing outfit, started in 1950. Old Honolulu sea hands say Captain Mike DeRego can "smell the fish." Want a trophy shot? Board the *Maggie Joe.*

At **Blue Nun Sportfishing** ★ (Kewalo Basin, slip L; ☎ 808/596-2443; www.bluenunsportfishing.com; private half day $700, private full day $900, shared half

A Dolphin Encounter

Frolicking with Flipper may be one of the all-time biggest dreams for kids (even the grown-up kind). **The Kahala Hotel** ★ Kids (5000 Kahala Ave.; ☎ 808/739-8918; www.dolphinquest.org; $265 ages 13 and up, $185 kids 5–12) features a natural lagoon that's home to six Atlantic bottlenose dolphins. Children and adults, even those not staying at the hotel, can touch and observe the dolphins up close in shallow water, overseen by staff trainers. The 2-hour kids' Quest for Knowledge session also includes feeding reef fish and sting rays. Spending time with Hoku, Liho, and the other dolphins will probably be the highlight of any Oahu trip and is a worthy splurge.

Of course, swimming with dolphins has its critics and supporters. You may want to visit the Whale and Dolphins Conservation Society's website at www.wdcs.org. For more information about responsible travel in general, check out Tread Lightly (www.treadlightly.org) and the International Ecotourism Society (www.ecotourism.org).

A Seawalk

Diving isn't for everyone. If the thought of breathing into a respirator underwater isn't your idea of fun, but you'd still like to experience the undersea world, there's an easier option. **Tropical Ocean Sports** (46–133 Lilipuna Rd., Kaneohe; ☎ 808/235-7531; $55) offers the Seawalk—you wear what looks like a spaceman's helmet, into which air is pumped from a compressor on the boat at the surface, allowing you to breathe normally underwater. In 15 feet of water, you walk on the sandy bottom while holding onto a bar with five other visitors. The guide releases food, attracting fish. The business caters to Japanese tourists (the website is in Japanese), but all visitors are welcome. It's such a popular activity that Tropical Ocean keeps those waiting for their turn busy with jet skiing, windsurfing, canoe paddling, and snorkeling.

day $150, shared full day $190), colorful Captain Bob McCowan takes you out on his 48-foot custom-built boat, and lets you get as involved in the catch as you want. You leave at 6am and return around 4pm, which is the same timetable most fishing outfits stick to. McCowan takes care of every fishing need, but you supply your own food and drink. The captain loves to chat with visitors after trips and settle in with a beer or two—you'll feel like part of the family.

On the Leeward coast is two-boat **Boom Boom Sportfishing** (Ko Olina Marina and Waianae Boat Harbor; ☎ 808/306-4162; www.boomboomsportfishing.com). A 50-footer leaves from Ko Olina Marina and a 40-footer leaves from Waianae. Both have six-person limits and the company will arrange transportation to get you to either marina. The Waianae excursion is $600 for an 8-hour trip, $400 for 4 hours. If you're going on a shared fishing trip, the cost is $150 per person. Out of Ko Olina, it's $700 for 8 hours and $500 for 4 hours, or $175 for a shared trip. Boom Boom supplies fishing gear, sodas, and water. The food is up to you.

Sportfish Hawaii (575 Cooke St.; ☎ 877/388-1376 or 808/396-2607; www.sportfishhawaii.com) is one of the biggest fishing outfits in Hawaii, with 21 boats spread throughout the islands offering trips ranging from $188 for shared excursions to $937 for full-day excursions.

KAYAKING & CANOEING

Ocean kayaking and canoeing can be one of the best experiences you'll have on Oahu, particularly around **Kailua** and **Lanikai** on the Windward Side. The shallow waters allow you to see all the coral and, as you're paddling out, you can often see turtles popping up their heads and swimming along. If you go to Kailua or Lanikai and continue on to the Mokuluas, two off-shore islands, you can play on the sandy beach or take a walk around the protected bird sanctuary there. ***A word of caution:*** The waves hit the back side of the Mokuluas with amazing force. (It's considered the boundary line for the reef that protects the Kailua and Lanikai shores.) More than one tourist has been swept out to sea trying to climb the backside.

For a change from the lapping of waves, head to the Windward Coast's **Kahana Stream.** It's like going on a jungle hike, but in serene, calm water, as you head up lush Kahana Valley. This spot is great for beginners. Start at Kahana Bay Beach Park and paddle the tranquil water amid a chorus of birds. The upstream trip is less than a mile.

To kayak in places like Kahana Stream, you need to rent and transport a kayak. Kayak rental shops are clustered in Kailua, where you can also rent a vessel right on the beach. Kayaks are available as singles or tandem. It can be more physical than it looks, though. If you've got weak stomach muscles, pay extra for the back rest; if you're just plain weak in general, get a tandem kayak to share the load. The rental prices here are for standard gear, but shops also offer premium kayaks (at premium prices) for experienced kayakers.

Kailua Sailboards and Kayaks (139 Kailua Rd.; ☎ 808/262-2555; www.kailuasailboards.com) is 1 block from Kailua Beach and offers tours and lessons. A guided tour to the Mokulua Islands is $119, while rentals can go from $39 for a single kayak for a half day to $59 for a full-day double (weekly rates are also available). In business since 1982, **Twogood Kayaks & Canoes** ✦ (345 Hahani St.; ☎ 808/262-5656; www.twogoodkayaks.com) is a reliable outfit with a seasoned staff. Its rental rates are the same as Kailua Sailboards and Kayaks, but its guided tour to the Mokuluas is $10 less. The best Kailua deal is to be had at **Hawaiian Watersports** (354 Hahani St.; ☎ 808/262-5483; www.hawaiianwatersports.com). Its rental prices are the same as the competition, but it includes back rests, which you have to pay extra for elsewhere. And its 2-hour group tours to the Mokuluas are only $89.

If you're in Waikiki and want to stay there, you can get outfitted at **Go Bananas** (799 Kapahulu Ave.; ☎ 808/737-9514; www.gobananaskayaks.com), a mile from Waikiki beach. Full-day rentals cost $30 for a single and $42 for a double, and the price includes car racks (because you'll need them—along with a rental car to drive the kayaks to the beach).

SUBMARINE RIDES

Not everyone can surf, snorkel, or scuba together, but submarine rides are underwater experiences that you can share with your loved ones. They also offer a glimpse of some of the island's most fascinating underwater sights: man-made reefs, sunken ships and planes, turtles, tons of tropical fish, and sometimes even sharks. With a sub ride, there's no getting wet, no physical activity, and you sit side by side in air-conditioning. The only downside: no bathrooms and it won't be a fun experience for claustrophobes.

The only submarine tour on the island is in Waikiki, with **Atlantis Submarines** (Hilton Hawaiian Village, Alii Tower, next to Tropics Cafe; ☎ 800/548-6262 or 808/973-9811; www.go-atlantis.com). The 1½-hour submarine tour costs about $100 for adults and $60 for kids up to age 12 at the ticket booth, but go online and you can get a 10% discount or more—sometimes there are Internet sales with prices as low as $66 for adults and $38 for kids.

HOVER WITH THE SHARKS

Going underwater to get up close and personal with sharks may sound insane (especially since the number of great-white-shark spottings on the Leeward coast seems to be on the rise), but those who go swear it's a thrilling, safe experience.

Generally, tours run for about 2 hours and carry about six people on the boat, with all equipment provided by the adventure companies.

You're a Discovery Channel addict and want to see sharks with a bona fide shark-crazed captain? Book a trip with the North Shore's **Hawaii Shark Encounters** (Haleiwa Boat Harbor; ☎ 888/349-7888 or 808/356-1800; www.hawaiisharkencounters.com; $100 adults, $50 children under 12) and have your picture taken with Jimmy Hall. On December 29, 2005, Hall was leading a cage-dive expedition when his students started motioning: A great white was swimming by. Hall did the unthinkable and left the cage to film the shark. He felt so comfortable, he touched the 19-footer as it passed. Great whites are a rare sight in Hawaiian waters (you'll most likely see Galapagos and sandbar sharks), but that's proof that you never know what to expect when you're 3 miles out to sea. You'll put on a provided mask and snorkel and be suspended about 10 feet deep in a 6×6-foot Plexiglas-shielded cage—just enough distance to keep you safe from the sharks' jaws. And if you don't see a shark (a rarity), you don't pay.

North Shore Shark Adventures (Haleiwa; ☎ 808/228-5900; www.hawaiisharkadventures.com; $120) is a tad more expensive, but the people working at Hawaii Shark Encounters got their start here, at the oldest shark-viewing operation on Oahu. Surfer, diver, and artist—and experienced boat captain—Joe Pavsek takes clients about 3 miles offshore in 400 feet of water for the 2-hour tours. Passengers put on snorkels and get into the cage while chum is tossed in the water. Soon, reef sharks, Galapagos, maybe even a vicious tiger shark, will circle around you. If you just want to watch from the boat—which is plenty thrilling in itself—the tour costs $60.

PARASAILING/JET SKIS

You don't have to jump out of a plane or rent a glider or helicopter to get a unique look at Oahu. Instead, you can either go single or tandem parasailing, where you're pulled by a boat and lifted 300 to 800 feet in the air. The boat tows you along as you "fly" quietly above the ocean, where you can see dolphins, turtles, and (Dec–Apr) whales. You'll also have great views of Diamond Head, Honolulu, and Waikiki if you leave out of Kewalo Basin, or Hawaii Kai if you leave out of Koko Marina.

Two outfits that offer good-value packages are, first, **Hawaiian Parasail** (Kewalo Basin, 1085 Ala Moana Blvd.; ☎ 808/591-1280; www.tombarefoot.com; $40 for 10 min.), which takes you soaring off Waikiki and offers free shuttles from hotels. It also accepts people who use wheelchairs for parasailing (you will be carried onto the boat). Book online for a 10% discount.

Next, **Hawaii Water Sports Center** (kids) (Koko Marina Shopping Center; ☎ 808/395-3773; www.hawaiiwatersportscenter.com; parasail $59 for 10 min. in air, jet ski $69 for half-hour) is a one-stop shop for boat-related watersports such as parasailing, jet skiing, and wakeboarding. You'll be off the coast of Hawaii Kai—check out the luxurious beachfront homes as you loft in the air or rip the calm waters on your jet ski. ***By bus:*** no. 58 from Waikiki.

HORSEBACK RIDING

So you want to be a *paniolo* (Hawaiian cowboy)? The best place for trail riding is **Kualoa Ranch and Activity Club** (Kaaawa; ☎ 808/237-8515; www.kualoa.com; $57 for a 1-hr. ride, $87 for a 2-hr. ride), which owns two of the most spectacular

valleys on the island. The 1-hour ride tours the southern half of the 4,000-acre spread, and you get nice views of Chinaman's Hat and an 800-year-old fishpond. But I recommend you pay the extra $30 to go deep into Kaawa Valley, where scenes of *Jurassic Park* were filmed. It's easy to see why, with its rolling hills, stands of hau and hala trees, and guava groves. You'll also ride past World War II bunkers. The ranch offers ATV rides as well (but I prefer the quiet of horseback), and kayaking, and has a shooting range. It combines activities in full- and half-day packages that include a buffet lunch and round-trip transport from Waikiki; package prices range from $94 to $139 for adults and $69 to $79 for children.

Experienced riders will be happily surprised by the quality of horses at **Happy Trails Hawaii** (59–231 Pupukea Rd.; ☎ 808/638-7433; www.happytrailshawaii.com; $55 for a 1½-hr. ride, $75 for 2 hr.) on the North Shore. The manager is a polo player, and many of his mounts are impeccably trained, retired, thoroughbred polo ponies. Guides take riders through tropical fruit orchards and rolling green ranchland. Ride time includes a briefing; Happy Trails accepts children 6 and older.

SKATEBOARDING

Grinding the stair railings of a public building isn't legal here, but that doesn't stop the hundreds of kids who find ways to amuse themselves everywhere from a Jiffy Lube parking lot to the roof of Manoa Elementary School. To keep skaters off the streets, the City & County of Honolulu have slowly been building skate parks around the island.

The epicenter of the Hawaiian scene is **Aala Park** (Beretania St., between Aala St. and River St.); with its lips and rails, Aala has the best street course. Exhibitions (pros Stevie Williams, Jack Curtin, Wade Desarmo, and Marcus McBride did a demo on this course in early 2006) and competitions are occasionally held here, but in general you'll find top local skaters hanging around most evenings—the park is lit until 9pm.

Kamiloiki Community Skatepark (7750 Hawaii Kai Dr., Hawaii Kai) has three miniramp bowls. Christian Hosoi has been known to drop by when he's in town.

In Kailua is Keolu Hills Skatepark, designed by Chuck Mitsui, who owns the Kailua skate shop **808 Skate** (354 Hahani St., Kailua; ☎ 808/263-0808). You'll find bowls and a street area.

For gear and perhaps hooking up with local skaters, visit **Aala Park Boardshop** (1200 College Walk, at Beretania St.; ☎ 808/585-8538), more commonly known as APB, on the edge of Chinatown. It's conveniently located across the street from the Aala Park skate park.

Discounted Golf Online

Visit **www.teetimeshawaii.com** (☎ 888/675-GOLF or 808/922-0431) for a playing card that can get you up to 50% off on some rounds—though it's more often a $10 discount. Of course, every little bit helps. The card is honored at several courses on Oahu and the other Hawaiian islands. **Standby Golf** (☎ 888/645-BOOK; www.standbygolf.com) also softens the blow on the wallet with a similar discount card.

To find out about events and Oahu skate gossip, visit **www.hirollingmedia.com**, a local skateboard site run by former sponsored skater Ryan Toyama.

GOLF

When it comes to golf on Oahu, it's all about choices—there are 39 courses on the island and they range from easy executive links to one that's considered by many to be among the hardest on the planet (Ko'olau Golf Club, below). A couple of things to remember: Oahu has what many local golfers call "microclimates" that make it possible to almost always find a dry golf game; you simply have to be willing to drive. In the rainy winter months, head to the Leeward coast. Courses in Ewa and Makaha don't get nearly as much precipitation as the Koolau mountain range and North Shore courses.

There are also some good deals to be had for this sport of kings. You can expect to pay at least $90 or $100 at the public, semiprivate, and resort courses, but if you're willing to sacrifice well-kept fairways with yardage markers, the municipal courses are a great deal at just $42 a round. Actually, if you can get a tee time at Ala Wai Municipal, you're getting the best value on the island.

Ala Wai Municipal ★★ (404 Kapahulu Ave.; ☎ 808/733-7387 or 808/296-2000; $42 nonresidents) is the crème de la crème of the municipals, the flagship the city pumps its money into, and just a stone's throw from Diamond Head. (Good luck getting a weekend tee time, though—bookings for locals start at 6:30am, 7 days in advance, while nonresidents can book only 3 days in advance, so chances of getting an early-morning time are relegated to the standby list—which is always long.) This is the only municipal with good yardage markers, and the greens rival most on Oahu. It's known not only for its convenient Waikiki location, but for its abundance of long par-3s, at least three over 190 yards, and well-kept greens. The clubhouse, incidentally, is the only municipal with a TV in it and has the best menu of all munis. Unlike the other municipals, Ala Wai has a great practice facility that's always busy, a beautiful clubhouse and restaurant, and marshals who give you the boot if your group is not keeping up to the group in front—that's how the Ala Wai is able to host more than 90,000 rounds a year, the most of any course in the country. Play fast, or play elsewhere.

Because getting a tee time at Ala Wai is like hitting the lottery, you might try the next best municipal option: **Ewa Village Golf Course** ★ (91–1760 Park Row St., Ewa Beach; ☎ 808/681-0220 or 808/296-2000; $42 nonresidents). There are some dirt patches on all the munis, but Ewa Village typically has consistent greens, better-than-average length, and a good mix of short and long holes. And it's cheap.

With spectacular ocean and mountain views, **Makaha West Golf Club** ★★ (84–626 Makaha Valley Rd., Waianae; ☎ 808/695-9544; $140 weekdays before noon, $95 after noon) is Oahu's underrated gem. The course is always well manicured, the ocean can be seen on most holes, and if you look to the mountain range, you'll almost always see rainbows lapping over each other. If it's raining on other parts of the island, local golfers trek to Makaha. ***Tip:*** Pay attention to where the mountains and ocean are on each putt—the grain on the Bermuda-grass greens pulls *makai* (toward the water). Played from the tips, the West course is one of the island's longest at more than 7,000 yards.

Playing at the **Ko'olau Golf Club** ★★ (45–550 Kionaole Rd., Kaneohe; ☎ 808/236-4653; $135, $99 after noon, $79 after 2pm) is more of a novelty, but you will

be able to say you tackled the world's toughest course (as it's named). After you play it, you'll have a few more choice names for it, too. Tucked just below the Koolau mountain range in a rainforest, playing the course feels like being in Jurassic Park (in fact, scenes from the film were shot nearby). The par-4, 18th hole plays over two ravines, and if you're playing a skins game, it's not uncommon to offer an extra one for simply making par on the final hole, where the green is also surrounded by sand bunkers. Locals advise golfers to bring at least one ball per handicap number, and even if you're a single-digit handicap, you should bring a dozen balls. Then again, you can always step into the bush at virtually any spot on the course and find someone's lost ball. Because of the course's rainforest location, the high amount of rain makes it cart-path-only year-round. Honey's Grill at the clubhouse is worth the trip to Koolau just for the food.

There aren't too many golfers who aren't willing to shell out the $165 to play the Arnold Palmer Course at **Turtle Bay Resort** ✯✯✯ (57–091 Kamehameha Hwy., Kahuku; ☎ 808/293-8574; $165 for the Palmer course, $155 for the Fazio course). I play various courses every week and I can tell you it is the best-kept course on the island. If you can manage to play 36 holes in a day, this is the place to do it. The resort also features the George Fazio Course. Both courses have massive, undulating greens. After a round, you can head to the hotel's gazebo for mai tais and Lava Flows and watch the surf roll in. If you really want a challenge, played from the tips, the Palmer course measures over 7,100 yards. When the trade winds are blowing, breaking 80 and even 90 is a heroic feat. Enjoy the course and play from the whites or blues. The cavernous greens and trade winds are enough of a challenge. The front of the Palmer course is more of a links course; the back features more trees. The Golf Channel's *Big Break* TV show shot its fifth season here in late 2005 for an airdate in spring 2006.

Not as long as Turtle Bay (and the wind doesn't come into play as much), **Ko'Olina Golf Club** ✯✯✯ (92–1220 Aliinui Dr., Kapolei; ☎ 808/676-5300; $150, $80 twilight, $105 after noon) offers amenities that are as big a draw as the course itself. In early February, you'll find NFL stars (in town for the Pro Bowl) dotting the fairways. The rest of the time, you'll see some wonderfully set-up holes, including one where you'll pass under a waterfall to get to the next tee. The par-4 18th is a great finishing hole. Big hitters will have to lighten up or risk losing their ball in the pond that's about 280 yards out from the blues. The approach shot is over the water onto a green surrounded by sand bunkers. When you finally sink your putt, the ultragourmet Roy's Restaurant is just a few steps away.

HIKING

With rainforests, waterfalls, streams, cliffs, valleys, and ridges—some right in Honolulu—Oahu is a hiker's paradise. Hitting the trails is a great way to see the island, especially since most paths lead up, ending with spectacular views.

Important: When you're hiking on Oahu, wear bright clothing, check your cellphone coverage, and let friends and family know the route you're taking. Bring a lot of water and sunscreen. Don't think that you can't get lost because it's an island. People get lost hiking here all the time. For maps and detailed descriptions of Oahu's hikes, visit **www.hawaiitrails.com**, the website of Na Ala Hele, the state's Trail and Access program.

Ten minutes from Waikiki is the Makiki Forest Recreation Area, which has a network of trails I highly recommend for their convenience and variety. The trail

Trail Guides

Want someone else to lead the way? **Oahu Nature Tours** (☎ 808/924-2473; www.oahunaturetours.com) mixes history and botany lessons along with Hawaiian legends into their guided hikes. You'll get a real sense of what you're hiking across.

head is at the **Hawaii Nature Center** (2131 Makiki Heights; ☎ 808/955-0100), where you'll find a restroom and water fountain. From here, take the Kanealole trail, which connects to the easy 1.1-mile **Makiki Valley Trail** and the .7-mile **Maunalaha Trail** that rises to a dry, forested ridgeline, 500 feet above sea level. If you take the Makiki Valley Trail, you'll make a loop with nine interpretive signs about the forest you're walking through and the medicinal uses of the plants you see. The valley was once home to a thriving Hawaiian community and you'll see remnants of it—a stone wall here, a coffee plant there—as you hike. Cool and dense with trees, these are nice hikes at any time of day.

If you're driving: On Makiki Street, driving toward the mountain, take a left on Makiki Heights Drive. Proceed about a half mile. The road makes a sharp left turn, but continue straight, past a row of mailboxes and through a green gate. Continue up the road and park in the gravel parking lot on your left. Proceed up the road on foot; the trail head begins behind the public restroom.

Manoa Falls is a popular hike in town because it's short (great for families) and leads to a waterfall. If you hike it, pay the $5 to park in Paradise Park (a safer option than parking in the surrounding area; also, if you park anywhere on the fire land beyond Paradise Park, you'll be fined and towed). The **Wili Wili Nui Trail** is a quick trip to the top through a forest reserve filled with guava, mountain apples, and wild ginger. You'll be rewarded with a beautiful view, but be sure to bring bug repellent—the area is filled with mosquitoes; also call ☎ 808/587-1300 before you set out to make sure that the trail is open.

One of the locals' favorite hiking spots is the **Makapuu Lighthouse Trail.** It's just 1.4 miles in length and there's no designated parking area, but it's paved to the top, where you get a view of the lighthouse and passing ships. If you bring your binoculars, you should be able to see the show at Sea Life Park and the boogie boarders on Sandy Beach. You're likely to see whales in the winter months and turtles year-round. Park along Kalanianaole Highway (Hwy. 72), head through the gate, and stay on the road.

Long but easy, the 6.8-mile round-trip trail in the **Kaena Point Natural Area Reserve** is a great alternative to the forested mountain hikes. The payoff here is a wild coastline of dunes, where albatross nest during the winter. The trail follows the old bed of a train line that once hauled sugar cane to Honolulu. Go early to beat the heat—the sun is strong out at this westernmost point of Oahu—and take water with you.

If you're driving: Take Kamehameha Highway all the way to the end. Park by the bathroom and lifeguard stand to avoid having your car broken into, and walk to the trail head at the end of the road.

Hiking and Car Thieves

Cars parked near trail heads are targets for car thieves. If you drive to a hiking spot, be sure not to leave valuables in the car. If you can't take your purse with you, lock it in the trunk.

BIKING

Oahu is not a bike-friendly island. Bisected by the HI freeway, it's easy to find yourself in hairy four-way intersections under overpasses. With heavy traffic and drivers who have little regard for two-wheeled vehicles (this is no Amsterdam), cyclists unfamiliar with the streets pedal at their own risk. Though there are bike lanes on roads within the city, they aren't respected by local drivers. And there's no getting around the fact that the island is divided by two mountain ranges—that's a lot of uphill roads.

Now that you have our warning, biking around Honolulu does have some areas that are nice for street cruises—around Kapiolani Park, Waikiki, and Ala Moana Beach Park, for example, all of which have bike lanes that are respected. If you're an avid two-wheeler, check out the great values at **Big Kahuna Rentals** (407 Seaside Ave.; ☎ 888/451-5544 or 808/924-2736; www.bigkahunarentals.com; $20 for 24 hr., $15 full day [8am–5:30pm], $10 half day, $70 per week). Prices include a Giant-brand bike, a city map, locks, and helmets. The staff will point you to the safer areas to ride, including toward Kapiolani Park and into the posh residential neighborhood of Kahala. You can bike up to Diamond Head from Waikiki, spend a few hours hiking up the crater, then bolt back down to your hotel without dealing with heavy traffic congestion, cabs, buses, or car rentals. The company will also direct you to bike trails around the island that provide quiet, scenic rides. ***Note:*** Big Kahuna doesn't accept American Express.

On the North Shore, **Barnfield's Raging Isle Surf & Cycle** (66–250 Kamehameha Hwy., Bldg. B, Haleiwa; ☎ 808/637-7707) rents mountain bikes starting at $40 a day and has bike racks available for your rental car.

If you like to play in the dirt, there's only one place to go on Oahu: **Bike Hawaii** ★★ kids (☎ 877/682-7433; www.bikehawaii.com). Gregarious owner and guide John Alford is a competitive mountain biker and wrote the book *Mountain Biking Hawaii,* a guide to the best spots on six of the Hawaiian Islands. I highly recommend the 6-mile, 3-hour Kaaawa Valley tour. The valley is privately owned by Kualoa Ranch (p. 169), and the only way to see this primeval swath of land is to book a horseback or ATV ride on the ranch, or to mountain-bike with Alford. You don't have to be a rock-hopping expert to take the tour, but if you are, a guide will split off from the beginner group to advanced single-track trails, so everyone is happy. Besides getting a good ride, you'll explore a World War II bunker (which is now a minimuseum highlighting the films that have been shot in the valley), ride through dense stands of hala, hau, and guava trees (if they're in season, guides might even pick some fruit for you to taste), and learn about the flora and valley history from your knowledgeable guides. To give you an idea of the trail variety, Kaaawa Valley is where the annual 24 Hours of Hell mountain-bike competition is held.

If you prefer a road ride, another excellent tour is the 6-hour Bike & Hike—Alford leases 200 acres of private land in Manoa and his company is the only one that can take people on this 1-mile round-trip hike through lush forest to a waterfall. You'll see brilliant red torch ginger, the remnants of ancient Hawaiian taro patches, and maybe a rare bird or two. From the hike, Bike Hawaii shuttles you to the top of Tantalus and you cruise 5 miles downhill, taking in panoramic city views and a roadside lunch. Both tours cost $96 for adults ($72 for kids 13 and under).

For experienced mountain bikers: You won't find it on their website, but upon request Alford will set up an exclusive "100% Dirt Tour," a guided, hardcore, single-track trail ride.

Bike Hawaii supplies the suspension bikes (good-quality Trek models), helmets, and sandwich lunches, and it picks up riders at a number of Waikiki Hotels. The company also has a tour that includes snorkeling in the mix, and a hike-only option.

SKYDIVING

If you're going to plunge out of a plane, Oahu is one of the best places to do it—from 11,000 to 13,000 feet up, you can see the entire island, from Diamond Head to the North Shore, while sating your inner adrenalin junkie. The instructors are world-class and both local companies have excellent safety records.

The North Shore offers skydiving with the two outfits on the island based at Dillingham Airfield in Mokuleia. Both companies have superb safety reputations, along with great staffs and facilities, but the better choice between the two is **Pacific International Skydiving** ✯✯✯ (☎ 808/637-7472; www.pacific-skydiving.com; $245 tandem jump; must be 18 or older and weigh less than 240 lb.; no scuba diving 24 hr. prior, day advance), which has a newer, more powerful plane (King Air 100) that is quicker and can attain a higher altitude. Pacific International runs $100-off coupons in local tourist publications such as *This Week Oahu,* which is available for free all over the island, from street racks in Waikiki to hotel lobbies.

Skydive Hawaii ✯✯ (Dillingham Airfield; ☎ 808/637-9700; www.skydivehawaii.com; $225 tandem jump, $300 for two people; must be 18 or older and weigh less than 200 lb.) gets a lot of traffic in part because it's the first company you hit at the airfield.

Both companies offer tandem jumps for first-timers as well as courses to become a certified skydiver.

The Century Ride

In late September, hundreds of people enter the annual **Honolulu Century Ride,** which begins and ends at Kapiolani Park. You can ride 25, 50, 75, or 100 miles (the longest stretch goes all the way to Hauula) and it's a great way to see the island. Download an entry form at www.hbl.org. At this same site, you'll find helpful listings of bike-route maps and mountain-biking trails, along with weekly rides and clinics available the rest of the year.

If you're driving: From Honolulu, take H-1 West to H-2 North. When H-2 ends, it turns into Highway 803, which you'll take past Schofield Barracks toward Mokuleia. Follow the signs to Waialua, past the blinking light. At the circle drive, stay left and you'll hit Farrington Highway (Hwy. 930). Go 4½ miles to the Dillingham Airfield. Skydive Hawaii is the first building on the left, Pacific Skydiving the third.

HELICOPTER TOURS

There's only one way to see Oahu's hidden gem, a majestic, 1,000-foot waterfall, and that's by helicopter tour. About 10 years ago, 10 hikers died in a mudslide while trekking to the cascade—what we know as Sacred Falls—and the once-popular hiking trail has been off-limits to the public ever since. That's where helicopters come in—they offer the only opportunity to hover over Sacred Falls, deep in Kaaawa Valley. Helicopter tours are the quickest and most scenic way to tour Oahu and other islands. You can look inside Diamond Head Crater, get a bird's-eye view of where the Japanese flew in and bombed Pearl Harbor, and travel across the North Shore, Kaaawa Valley, and every other scenic spot on the island. Most of the tour operations are based out of Turtle Bay Resort's helipad. **Paradise Helicopters** (☎ 808/293-2570; www.paradisecopters.com; $120–$220) and **Mauna Loa Helicopters** (☎ 808/834-6799; www.maunaloahelicopters.com; $120–$220) are both based out of Turtle Bay. The rest of the helicopters are based at the airport. Tours for all helicopter services range from 15 minutes to 2 hours or more. Another solid company, **Makani Kai Helicopters** (☎ 808/834-5813; www.makanikai.com; $89–$225) often hooks up with incoming cruise-line ships to give their passengers rides as part of package deals.

GLIDER RIDES

Observing the island by glider is the opposite of noisy helicopters; you'll feel like a whisper in the clouds soaring over Oahu, which has wind conditions that make it one of the best places on earth to pilot gliders. **Soar Hawaii** (Dillingham Airfield Gate #2, Rte. 930, Mokuleia; ☎ 808/637-3147; www.soarhawaii.com; $39 for 10 min., $158 for 1 hr.) offers four different glider rides that run from a serene sightseeing tour to an acrobatic stomach-turner with somersaults. The company has six glider planes and two tow planes. Kids must be 11 or older to fly alone. The scenic tour takes you over Mount Kaala, the highest mountain on the island, part of the Waianae range, and the cliffs and breaking surf on the North Shore. On clear days, you can see most of the island, including Pearl Harbor, Diamond Head, and Honolulu.

ATTENTION, SHOPPERS!

For a long time, shopping on Oahu was geared to Japanese tourists, which explains the prevalence of high-end boutiques—including Prada, Yves Saint Laurent, Chanel, and Gucci—along Kalakaua Avenue. Goods from shops like these are a lot cheaper here than in Tokyo and designer-hungry Japanese flock to them, dropping hundreds a pop. Honolulu is also home to the world's largest open-air mall, and 45 minutes away is a big outlet center. When I travel, I like to buy things that speak of the place but aren't made expressly for tourists. That's what I concentrate on here.

MALLS

When it opened in 1959, **Ala Moana Center** (1450 Ala Moana Blvd.; ☎ 808/955-9517; www.alamoana.com) was the biggest shopping center in the nation. Still growing, it's now the largest open-air shopping center in the world, with more than 260 shops and restaurants. If shopping is your hobby, you can easily spend a whole day here, taking a break at the food court (for Hawaiian food, try the Poi Bowl), and strolling from one end to the other. More than 56 million people shuffle through its four levels every year (it's especially crowded in the run-up to the holidays, and parking is nonexistent then). You'll find numerous high-end stores—Neiman Marcus, Prada, Christian Dior, and Armani; mall staples like Gap and Banana Republic; and lots of other usual suspects.

But you can also buy local here. Hawaii's premier maker of koa furniture, jewelry boxes, and other knickknacks is **Martin & MacArthur** (mall level; ☎ 808/941-0074). For high-end ukuleles, there's the **Ukulele House** (mall level; ☎ 808/955-8587). For surf shorts, bathing suits, surf gear, and street wear, there are three Hawaii-based companies with shops in Ala Moana: **Locals Only** (street level; ☎ 808/942-1555), **Island Snow** (mall level; ☎ 808/943-0088), and **Hawaiian Island Creations** (street level; ☎ 808/973-6780). At **Honolulu City Store** (street level; ☎ 808/955-3075), you can get things emblazoned with city agencies, such as Honolulu Fire Department T-shirts. **Products of Hawaii, Too** (street level; ☎ 808/949-6866) and **Islands' Best** (street level; ☎ 808/949-5345) sell locally made crafts and foods such as jams, chocolates, and condiments.

For everything Japanese, from Hello Kitty stickers to sake sets, Oahuans head to **Shirokiya** (mall level; ☎ 808/973-9160), where the food department is chockfull of delicious prepared foods. Buy a bento lunch and take it across the street to Ala Moana Beach Park.

Honolulu's two other main shopping hubs are **Ward Centre** (1200 Ala Moana Blvd.; ☎ 808/591-8411) and **Ward Warehouse** (1050 Ala Moana Blvd.; ☎ 808/591-8411)—which are on a more human scale than Ala Moana (and just west of the giant mall on Ala Moana Blvd.). They're part of a complex called Victoria Ward Centers, named after the woman who, with her husband, developed a luxurious 100-acre estate that stretched from Blaisdell Concert Hall to this consumer zone.

Ward Centre features **Welcome to the Islands** (☎ 808/593-2035), which carries locally made body-care lines, home furnishings, and clothing; a **Borders Books & Music** (☎ 808/591-8995) with a good Hawaiian book section; and the cool Pacific-oriented home-design shop **SoHa** (☎ 808/591-9777). The center is also home to some of Honolulu's most popular eateries: **Brew Moon Restaurant & Microbrewery** (☎ 808/593-0088), **Compadres Bar & Grill** (☎ 808/591-8307), and **Kakaako Kitchen** (p. 123).

At Ward Warehouse, former international model **Mamo Howell** (☎ 808/591-2002; www.mamohowell.com) has an eponymous store selling resort-wear designs that run from $40 T-shirts to dramatic full-length floral muumuus for $160. **Cinnamon Girl** (☎ 808/591-6532; www.cinnamongirl.com) sells original-print sundresses, tops, and skirts (and lots of mother-daughter match-ups) with dresses running from $59 to $170. The **Nohea Gallery** (☎ 808/591-9001; www.noheagallery.com) features work by local artisans; you can pick up $10 dish towels with Hawaiian prints or hand-turned koa bowls for $200.

Mall Time

Ala Moana Center: Open Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 9pm, Sunday 10am to 7pm. From Waikiki, catch TheBus 8, 19, 20, 42, or 58. Buses drop off passengers at the Kona Street Transit Center on the north side of the center. Ala Moana also offers $2 shuttle transportation (look for the Pink Line trolleys) between 10 Waikiki locations in Waikiki. Runs 7 days a week, every 8 minutes. Pickup at Ala Moana Center is at the Ala Moana Boulevard trolley depot. Shuttle stops: Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center, Duke Kahanamoku Statue, Aston Waikiki Beach Hotel, Waikiki Sand Villa Hotel, Ambassador Hotel of Waikiki, Hilton Hawaiian Village, Palms at Waikiki, and Ilikai Hotel (on Ala Moana Blvd., adjacent to Ilikai Hotel).

Ward Warehouse and Ward Centre: Open Monday to Saturday 10am to 9pm, Sunday 10am to 5pm. From Waikiki, you can catch TheBus 19, 20, or 42 from Kuhio Avenue. Other city bus lines that service Victoria Ward Centers are no. 6 (University/Pauoa), nos. 55 and 65 (Kaneohe), and nos. 56 and 57 (Kailua). The Waikiki Trolley (Sightseeing Red Line and Shopping Yellow Line; ☎ 808/593-2822) and Rainbow Trolley (☎ 808/539-9495) stop at the Victoria Ward Centers.

Note: Most shops are closed on Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

In the face of Oahu's high cost of living, residents love bargains. When the **Waikele Premium Outlets** (94–790 Lumiaina St., Waipahu; ☎ 808/676-5656; www.premiumoutlets.com) opened in the 1990s, locals went crazy. And Japanese tourists crowd the trolleys that shuttle from Waikiki to Waikele, a 45-minute drive from Honolulu. I go out there to shop at the Barneys New York outlet once in a while. Otherwise, it's like any other outlet mall on the mainland. Japanese tourists come by the trolley-load to stock up on goods from Coach, Calvin Klein, A/X Armani Exchange, and other stores. On weekends the parking lot is jammed with deal-hunting locals. There are a few Hawaii-based companies, such as Hawaiian Moon, Local Motion, and Crazy Shirts.

ANTIQUES

On Kapahulu Avenue, drive toward the mountains and on the left you'll spy the **Hawaii Antique Center** (932 Kapahulu Ave.; ☎ 808/734-6222). This no-frills shop carries cool Polynesian design items from Hawaii's prestatehood days. You can find carved monkeypod lamps, vintage posters, glassware, koa, and rattan furniture upholstered with floral bark-cloth fabrics. Prices range from $10 for little collectibles like Primo (a now extinct locally brewed beer) to $2,500 for a set of furniture.

BOOKSTORES

If you're looking for a book on any aspect of Hawaii—nature, history, traditional arts—chances are you'll find it at **Native Books/Na Mea Hawai'i** (Ward Centre, 1050 Ala Moana Blvd.; ☎ 800/887-7751 or 808/597-8967; www.nativebookshawaii.com). This shop is more than a bookstore. It's like a community center, with free classes in Hawaiian language and lauhala weaving, artist demonstrations, and a weekly concert by top performers in the mini-amphitheater outside the shop. Owner Maile Meyer carries art, handicrafts, jewelry, clothing, and body products that are all made in Hawaii. So, yes, that *kukui-nut lei* is more expensive than the one you saw at the jewelry stall in Ala Moana, but that's because it was made here, not in the Philippines—discerning eyes can easily see the difference in quality. There's also a branch in the Waikiki Hilton Hawaiian Village (2005 Kalia Rd.; ☎ 808/949-3989).

CLOTHING

Around since 1963, **Tahiti Imports** (1174 Waimanu St.; ☎ 808/591-2929; www.tahitiimports.com) carries fabrics from Tahiti and ones that co-owner Betty Lou Severson designs. You can buy shirts, skirts, and dresses made from the colorful floral cloths. If you're looking for a cool beach wrap, I highly recommend this shop.

Two well-known local artisans teamed up to open **Mango Season** (2636 S. King St.; ☎ 808/949-4355), where you can stock up on made-in-Hawaii gifts—most of them under $30. You'll find T-shirts by Cane Haul Road, which is known for designs that make whimsical design puns out of local sayings and traditions, and clothing by Tutuvi, made from beautiful Polynesian-patterned hand-screened fabrics, along with lots of other handcrafted items. In the neighborhood known as Moiliili, Mango Season is on a busy stretch of King Street near the university.

Kapahulu Avenue, on the Diamond Head end of Waikiki, has evolved into an antiques alley. Vintage aloha-shirt collectors gravitate to **Bailey's Antiques and Aloha Shirts** (517 Kapahulu Ave.; ☎ 808/734-7628). People plunk down $5,000 for especially rare shirts, like one from Samoa, but the packed-to-the-rafters store has more affordable finds, like vintage University of Hawaii T-shirts and Polynesian tiki kitsch, and it's a fun place to browse.

Aloha Bling

Hawaii has its own style of gold jewelry, involving floral designs such as earrings in the shape of plumerias and old English lettering on bracelets. Bracelets are especially popular here, and you'll notice them on women's arms. One of the best manufacturers of traditional Hawaiian jewelry is **Philip Rickard Honolulu** (Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center, first floor Ilima Court, 2201 Kalakaua Ave.; ☎ 808/924-7972; www.philiprickardhonolulu.com). Rickard's bangles caught the eye of pop diva Gwen Stefani, who had her models sport his jewelry in the 2005 fall fashion shows of her design line L.A.M.B.

Enterprising young Oahuans have opened a slew of street-wear shops in the last few years, most of them featuring their own designs, along with name-brand products. Honolulu's cool 20-something guys get their sneakers at **Kicks Hawaii** (1522 Makaloa St., second floor; ☎ 808/941-9191), which specializes in limited-edition and other hard-to-find shoes. There's also an in-house clothing line called Bittersweet. It's 1 block *mauka* of Ala Moana Center. Kicks Hawaii shares its space with **Leilow** (☎ 808/941-9191; www.leilow.com), a brand created by British former pro skater Jules Gayton.

In4mation (Ward Warehouse, 1050 Ala Moana Blvd., ☎ 808/597-1447, and Waikiki Shopping Plaza, 2250 Kalakaua Ave.; ☎ 808/923-0888; www.in4mants.com) sells in-house-designed T-shirts and the latest sneakers and street wear from other companies such as Stussy and Nike.

Former pro skater Rene Mathyssen and clothing designer Keola Rapozo launched **Fitted Hawaii** (1438 Kona St.; ☎ 808/942-3100) last year. Hawaii's exclusive vendor of New Era baseball caps, Fitted sells limited editions of the head gear, made with materials like linen and silk. Also in the lineup are in-house-designed T-shirts that beat the usual tops emblazoned with designs for tourists. The little boutique is just across the street from Ala Moana.

FOOD

Pat's Island Delights (Davies Pacific Center, 841 Bishop St., ☎ 808/536-1414, and Waiau Center, 98–459 Kamehameha Hwy., Pearl City, ☎ 808/484-8808; www.patsislanddelights.com) sells exclusive locally made edible goodies such as chocolates, cookies, and condiments.

NIGHTLIFE ON OAHU

Oahu's nightlife is the most diverse and rich of all the Hawaiian Islands. The tastes of an extremely varied group of revelers shaped it—royalty, wealthy expats, rabble-rousing military, and plantation workers looking to escape harsh reality—so today you have everything available from high-quality opera (a favorite diversion of King Kalakaua) to chic dance clubs to dive bars.

THE PERFORMING ARTS

The **Neal S. Blaisdell Center** (777 Ward Ave., at King St.; ☎ 808/591-2211; www.blaisdellcenter.com) is Honolulu's entertainment complex and an integral part of life on the island. (I saw my first rock concert—the Moody Blues—at the arena, and my mother and great aunts performed in productions of *Teahouse of the August Moon* in the concert hall.) Named after Honolulu's mayor from 1954 to 1968, the center is made up of a concert hall, arena, and exhibition hall. Among the resident companies that play the concert hall regularly are:

- **Honolulu Symphony** (☎ 808/792-2000; www.honolulusymphony.com). This world-class ensemble of skilled musicians accompanies such diverse visiting artists as soprano star Renée Fleming and violinist Chee-Yun (both slated for the 2006 season).
- **The Symphony Pops** (☎ 808/792-2000; www.honolulusymphony.com). The symphony is especially popular under the baton of charismatic composer-singer-saxophonist Matt Catingub. Dear to locals' hearts because he's part Samoan (his mother was jazz vocalist Mavis Rivers), Catingub puts together

High-Culture Seasons

Ballet Hawaii: Two productions a year, August and December (the annual *Nutcracker*). The ballet also brings in visiting companies in October.

Hawaii Opera Theatre: February to March; in July HOT puts on something lighter, such as a Gilbert & Sullivan operetta or a musical like 2006's *The King and I*.

Honolulu Symphony: Masterworks season runs from September to November, and from January to May.

Honolulu Symphony Pops: September to December, and March and April.

innovative programs, including bringing in Elvis Costello in 2006. He also appeared in the jazz band in George Clooney's *Good Night, and Good Luck.* (Catingub became friends with the actor/director's aunt when she performed her last-ever concert with the Pops—the recording earned a Grammy nomination in 2002.)

- **Hawaii Opera Theatre** (☎ 808/596-7858; www.hawaiiopera.org). Opera has a long history in Hawaii—royalty like King David Kalakaua loved it. Hawaii Opera Theater continues the tradition under the direction of Honolulu-born Henry Akina, who spent 14 years in Berlin, where he founded the Berlin Chamber Opera.
- **Ballet Hawaii** (☎ 808/521-6514; www.ballethawaii.org). It's not the New York City Ballet, but this little company keeps Oahu on point. Each year, it does one ballet (last year was *Coppélia*), and its annual *Nutcracker* production, with a visiting dancer doing principal duties.

Big acts like the Eagles and Elton John perform at the Arena when they come to town. Comedians Jerry Seinfeld and Lewis Black have also recently taken its stage.

Officially part of the Blaisdell complex, but in Kapiolani park, the **Waikiki Shell** (2805 Monsarrat Ave., in Kapiolani Park; ☎ 808/527-5400) is home to the annual Cazimero Brothers' May Day/Lei Day concert (see the sidebar on May Day, p. 182) and hosts concerts by performers such as Jack Johnson, Snoop Dogg, and Jimmy Buffett. When the moon and stars are out, this amphitheater is the venue that makes locals feel lucky to live in Hawaii.

Its renovation completed in 2004, the 1922 **Hawaii Theatre** (1130 Bethel St., at Pauahi St.; ☎ 808/528-0506; www.hawaiitheatre.com) promptly won the 2005 Award for Outstanding Restoration Project from the League of Historic American Theatres. The Beaux Arts facade now sports a new marquee, emblazoned with the names of upcoming shows—including *Stomp,* the Makaha Sons of Niihau, David Sedaris, and Icelandic band Sigur Ros. In 1984, the dilapidated theater was likely headed for demolition when concerned citizens formed the nonprofit Hawaii Theatre Center to save the structure. Now you can take a weekly guided tour (Tues 11am–noon; $5) and have things, like the allegorical mural *Glorification of Diana,* painted on the proscenium arch, explained to you. For an upcoming schedule, visit the website. ***One caveat:*** The seats aren't the most comfortable in town.

May Day at the Shell

An Oahu tradition—2006 marks its 29th year—is the Cazimero Brothers' **May Day/Lei Day concert at the Waikiki Shell** ★★ (2805 Monsarrat Ave., in Kapiolani Park; ☎ 808/527-5400). Locals prefer to bypass the reserved seating and buy general admission lawn seating, pack up picnics (but no booze allowed), and spread out mats on the expanse of grass (people can get pretty territorial). It's a great night under the stars at this amphitheater. Robert and Roland Cazimero, part of the 1970s Hawaiian music renaissance, sing in their heart-zinging harmonies, and are joined by surprise local-superstar guests such as Auntie Genoa Keawe and Amy Hanaialii-Gilliom. The duo is also accompanied by two hula *halau* (schools): Robert's Gentlemen of Na Kamalei and frequent collaborator Leinaala Kalama Heine's Ladies of Na Pualei O Likolehua. If you're in town on May 1, don't miss it. Gates open at 5:30pm, show starts at 7:30pm.

BEST LOCAL ENTERTAINMENT

To see some of Hawaii's master traditional musicians, go to the **Waikiki Beach Marriott Resort & Spa's Moana Terrace** ★★★ (2552 Kalakaua Ave.; ☎ 808/922-6611). On Sunday nights, George Kuo, Aaron Mahi, and Martin Pahinui take the stage, playing the great Hawaiian songbook. Bassist Mahi led the Royal Hawaiian Band for 25 years, Pahinui is the son of the late, great slack-key guitarist Gabby Pahinui (his voice is a dead ringer for his dad's), and Kuo is a slack-key virtuoso. On Thursday night, Auntie Genoa Keawe sings her famous falsetto. At 81, she's still going strong and gives the audience "chicken skin" (goose bumps) with her endless high notes. There's no admission; just sip a passion-fruit margarita and sit on the open-air terrace overlooking Waikiki listening to Hawaiian favorites like "Pua Lililehua" and "Hiilawe." Chances are you'll be sitting among other well-known musicians, such as Eddie Kamae, who come to listen to their friends play and sit in on the jam sessions.

Come to Halekulani's **House Without a Key** ★★ (2199 Kalia Rd., at Lewers St.; ☎ 800/367-2343 or 808/923-2311; www.halekulani.com)—a big lanai anchored by a giant *keawe* tree—on Monday and Tuesday nights, when the islanders set up their instruments. Leader Alan Akaka is a master steel guitarist who also happens to be the son of U.S. Senator Daniel Akaka and a music teacher at the prestigious Kamehameha Schools. His short histories and explanations teach you a lot about Hawaiian music.

The restaurant **Chai's Island Bistro** ★ (Aloha Tower Marketplace, 1 Aloha Tower Dr., off Ala Moana Blvd.; ☎ 808/585-0011) showcases Hawaii's biggest contemporary-music stars—the Cazimero Brothers, Jerry Santos (he was half of the 1970s duo Olomana; if you want to take home some Hawaiian CDs, buy the band's masterpiece *Like a Seabird on the Wind*), slack-key virtuoso Makana, and opera-trained Amy Hanaialii-Gilliom, among others. The catch is you have to buy dinner (there are zero lounge seats and not many stools at the bar), and

entrees run from $26 to $39 (the menu is so-so Hawaiian Regional Cuisine, with dishes like lobster pot stickers and mahimahi with Thai curry sauce). If you don't feel embarrassed by ordering just a couple of appetizers ($9.95–$12), which is what I do, it's actually not a bad deal.

At the age of 76, **Don Ho** ★ is still doing his show at the **Beachcomber Hotel** (2300 Kalakaua Ave.; ☎ 800/693-6646; www.donho.com; Sun, Tues, and Thurs; $32, $52 dinner package). He, and his costars—the elderly 50th-anniversary couples and kids he periodically calls up on stage—are a kitschy hoot. The man is a trouper—after undergoing an experimental stem-cell treatment in Thailand in November 2005, he was back on stage less than 2 months later. A little thinner, he returned in January to a sell-out crowd of 300. Even though he has trouble with his memory (sometimes he trails off on the lyrics to Tiny Bubbles), Ho still puts on an entertaining (if overpriced) evening. His band includes ukulele star Benny Chong. You can save up to $10 if you reserve online.

BARS & CLUBS

Chinatown

For Oahu's night crawlers, Chinatown has supplanted Waikiki as the place to be, with cool clubs clustered on or near Hotel Street.

Artist and impresario Gelareh Khoie partnered with internationally known DJ Harvey to open **thirtyninehotel** ★★ (39 N. Hotel St., between Smith St. and Nuuanu Ave.; ☎ 808/599-2552; www.thirtyninehotel.com; $8 cover). By night, the club hosts live jazz and visiting and resident DJs (my favorite spot is on the outdoor lanai). By day, thirtyninehotel is an art gallery (Tues–Sat noon–6pm), featuring contemporary local artists. The door is unmarked, with only the address to tell you where you are. Enter the door and walk up the stairs to the second floor.

To the right of thirtyninehotel is **NextDoor** ★★ (43 N. Hotel St.; ☎ 808/550-0496; www.whoisnextdoor.com; $10–$20 cover), a lounge-cinema-music venue started by Brazilian filmmaker Sergio Goes and promoters Chris Kahunahana and Miguel Innes. With its exposed brick walls, double-height ceilings, and plush red couches, NextDoor is my favorite place for a night out. DJs and MCs such as Los Angeles's Z-Trip and Myka Nyne, and New York's Ursula 1000, have played here.

To the left of thirtyninehotel is **Bar 35** (35 N. Hotel St.; ☎ 808/537-3535; www.bar35hawaii.com), a swank drinkery with glass-topped tables and exposed brick walls. The bar says it has 110 beers (although it seems like they're out of the one I want every time I go there), along with wine, cocktails, and pizzas—besides a classic margherita pizza (with mozzarella, tomato, and basil), you can get versions with Indian and Thai accents. The crowd here is more mainstream than the previous two venues.

Around the corner from these three venues is **Indigo Eurasian Cuisine** (1121 Nuuanu Ave.; ☎ 808/521-2900; www.indigo-hawaii.com), which spearheaded the Chinatown revival when it opened in 1994. This nightlife minicomplex includes two small bars called the **Green Room** and the **Opium Den,** and a restaurant serving Pacific Rim cuisine until 10pm. The space, broken up into little rooms and alcoves in a historic building, later turns into a club with DJs and live music. When street artist Shepard Fairey was in town for a residency at the Contemporary Museum in fall 2005, he manned the turntables here.

Note: There's very little crime in this area, but don't be shocked if you see a couple of down-and-outs smoking ice (crystal methamphetamine) when you exit these places late at night.

For a more sophisticated bar, head to the Halekulani hotel's **Lewers Lounge** (2199 Kalia Rd., at Royal Hawaiian Ave.; ☎ 808/367-2343; www.halekulani.com), where New York star mixologist Dale DeGroff is in residency 1 week a month. As the hotel's director of beverage arts, DeGroff has revamped the cocktail menu and made it the best in town. Classic drinks like Bees Knees and new creations (try the Mai Tai Royale, made with champagne) are created with fresh fruit juices. DeGroff also teaches cocktail-making classes during the week he's in town, which can be a fun detour from your beach routine.

Waikiki

Waikiki is packed with bars and clubs, and many restaurants and other venues host once-a-week parties. Here are some of the best:

Go-go dancers and a sleek crowd of under-30 partiers have made **Fashion 45** (Waikiki Trade Center, second floor, 2255 Kuhio Ave.; ☎ 808/922-4599; www.fashion45hawaii.com; Wed–Fri only; $15 cover) the success that it is. Lounge in the White Room (yes, it's like being in a cloud), on the white leather couches, or freak out on the spacious main room's dance floor. Grab a vodka tonic from one of the many bars sprinkled throughout the club. On Wednesday, women are admitted free before 11pm.

The Sheraton Waikiki's **Hanohano Room** (2255 Kalakaua Ave.; ☎ 808/922-4422), on the 30th floor, has long been a place where older patrons went for a swank supper-club evening, or to sip highballs at the bar looking out at the sweeping view of Waikiki's lights. But in the past couple of years, the aging space has been renovated and a new space called the Cobalt Lounge was added, which is the scene of two parties, one for the young and hip, the other for the young at heart. On the first and third Saturdays of each month is **Skyline** ($10), a throbbing scenester event that heats up around midnight. On Fridays, 40-to-60-somethings take over for **Live Jazz Fridays** (9pm–midnight; free), when Oahu's top jazz acts, such as Honolulu Jazz Quartet and trumpeter DeShannon Higa perform. Sip a Blue Ginger martini ($8), then hit the dance floor. Of course, you can drop in at the Cobalt Lounge on any night. Enjoy nightly 5 to 7pm happy-hour drink and appetizer specials ($5–$12), or go for the food on Friday and Saturday, when chefs man stations with savory appetizers from 5:30 to 8pm.

The granddaddy of Waikiki nightclubs is **Wave Waikiki** (1877 Kalakaua Ave., at Hobron Lane; ☎ 808/941-0424; www.wavewaikiki.com), which turned 25 last year. The club is known for its events: One night is a Girls Gone Wild Ultimate Rush, the next is a Honolulu bartender flair contest. The venue also hosts live bands and brings in DJs. This is where I go for a raucous night of dance abandon. The painting of a snorkeling geisha out front is by well-known local artist Roy Venters.

Party Time

On Oahu, clubs are generally open from 7pm to 2am.

What's Happening Where?

To find out what DJs are playing, where to catch lounge acts, find the latest local comedy showcase, or just see what movies are playing, pick up the latest issue of ***Honolulu Weekly,*** Oahu's free alternative newspaper, which you can find in red boxes around the island. Or buy the Friday edition of the ***Honolulu Advertiser,*** the island's largest daily, which includes a pullout TGIF section filled with complete entertainment listings. Honolulu's other daily, the ***Star-Bulletin,*** also has a pullout "what's happening" section on Friday.

One of Honolulu's newest venues is **Jazz Minds Art and Café** ✭ (1661 Kapiolani Blvd.; ☎ 808/945-0800), a clubby lounge where you can hear some of the island's best jazz bands, such as the Honolulu Jazz Quartet, and top comedians like Andy Bumatai. Sink into plush sofas or perch at the bar and order some pupu; the kitchen turns out well-done platters of local and Korean food.

LIVE MUSIC

The acoustics are terrible, but **Pipeline Café** (805 Pohukaina St.; ☎ 808/589-1999; www.pipelinecafe.net) in Kakaako (near the Victoria Ward Centers) nevertheless is the main live-music venue in town, bringing in rock (the Strokes), hip-hop (Pharcyde), comedy (Robert Shimmel), and DJs (Q-Bert). It's a shoebox of a concert space; upstairs are pool tables, electronic dartboards, and a bar. Check out the website for a current lineup.

GAY BARS & CLUBS

The hub of gay Honolulu is 33-year-old **Hula's Bar and Lei Stand** (Waikiki Grand Hotel, 134 Kapahulu Ave., at Kalakaua Ave., second floor; ☎ 808/923-0669; www.hulas.com) in Waikiki. Owned by impresario Jack Law (Wave Waikiki is also his), Hula's was once the best nightspot, period, in the 1970s, when it was in an open-air location. When it was razed to make way for a shopping center, Law moved the club to this second-floor space with a balcony overlooking Kapahulu Avenue and the zoo. It's still packed most nights, with every kind of man lined up around the big rectangular bar. Speedo-clad go-go boys and special events keep the place humming—if you're looking to hook up, this is the place to go. Hula's even hosts a once-a-week outing: Gay Luau Night. For $85, you can board a bus with up to 14 other gay men and go to the Ko Olina Resort luau on Sunday.

The most laid-back gay gathering place is the bar **Angles** (2256 Kuhio Ave., at Seaside Ave., second floor; ☎ 808/926-9766 or info line 808/923-1130), also in Waikiki. People are friendly, and my gay friends like to drop in to sit on the outdoor lanai, have a drink and chat, and maybe shoot a game of pool. Guys in tank tops and shorts perch around the blond-wood, green-topped bar. Angles hosts a catamaran cruise every Sunday—meet at the bar at 11am and ask the bartender for details.

Oahu's drag queens gather at **Fusion** (2260 Kuhio Ave., second floor; ☎ 808/924-2422), Oahu's only after-hours gay nightclub (it's open until 4am), featuring all-male strip revues, the Gender Bender Lip Gloss Revue on Friday, and the Paper

Doll Revue on Saturday. The spot is very local—if you want to meet someone born and raised here, Fusion is for you. Cover charge ranges from free to $5.

ABCs of Oahu

ATMs/Currency Exchange ATMs can be found outside banks, in supermarkets, at shopping centers, and in convenience stores such as 7-Eleven. There is a currency-exchange kiosk at the airport. In town, there is a **Travelex Currency Exchange** (1450 Ala Moana Blvd., second floor; ☎ 808/949-2813). In Waikiki, the **First Hawaiian Bank** (2181 Kalakaua Ave.; ☎ 808/943-4670) has a currency exchange.

Business Hours Banks are open Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 4pm. Open hours for offices are Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Most stores are open Monday to Saturday from 9am to 5pm, but the large shopping centers such as Ala Moana Center and Ward Centre are open 7 days a week, with extended hours.

Doctors/Hospital Honolulu has 11 major hospitals. Two of the best to call if you need medical assistance are **Queens Medical Center** (1301 Punchbowl St.; ☎ 808/538-9011) and **Kuakini Medical Center** (347 N. Kuakini St.; ☎ 808/536-2236).

Emergencies For police, fire, or ambulance, call ☎ **911.**

Internet Access There are many Internet cafes in Honolulu. In Waikiki, there's **Caffe Giovannini** (1888 Kalakaua Ave.; ☎ 808/979-2299; www.caffegiovannini.com), which doubles as an Internet lounge with seven computers. The biggest is **e-topia** (1363 S. Beretania St.; ☎ 808/593-2050; www.theetopia.com) with 40 computers and a T1 connection.

Pharmacies **Longs Drugs** is where most locals go to get prescriptions filled, and there are locations all over the island, including one in **Ala Moana Center** (☎ 808/949-4010; 8am–7pm). In Waikiki, there's a pharmacy in the **Ohana Waikiki West Hotel** (2330 Kuhio Ave.; ☎ 808/922-5022; 8am–10pm).

Police In an emergency, call ☎ **911.** In nonurgent situations, go to or call the Honolulu Police Department (801 S. Beretania St.; ☎ 808/529-3111).

Post Office Post offices are all over the island and most are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 4:30pm. The main post office is adjacent to the airport. The downtown post office is at 335 Merchant St. (☎ 808/532-1987). The Makiki Post Office (111 Lunalilo St; ☎ 808/532-5689) is also open Saturday from 8am to 2pm.

Visitor Information Oahu doesn't have a central tourist office to visit in person. But its two tourism offices send printed material by mail and have informative websites; **Hawaii Visitors & Convention Bureau** (2270 Kalakaua Ave.; ☎ 800/464-2924 or 808/923-1811; www.gohawaii.com); and **Oahu Visitors Bureau** (733 Bishop St., suite 1520; ☎ 877/525-6248 or 808/524-0722; www.visit-oahu.com).

4 Molokai: The Real Hawaii

Culture and nature are well preserved on this sparsely populated island.

by Joan Conrow

MOLOKAI BILLS ITSELF AS "THE LAST HAWAIIAN PLACE," AND THAT'S NOT far from the mark. With none of the big hotels, shops, and restaurants that are characteristic of developed resorts, this island is best for visitors who don't need a lot of pampering and services. If you're looking for rugged outdoor experiences, a relaxed pace, a lifestyle that reflects the Hawaiian culture, and plenty of peace and quiet, Molokai delivers.

What Molokai doesn't have—or want—is glitz and glamour. It takes pride in being laid-back and down-to-earth, an attitude that has earned it its nickname: "the Friendly Isle." Besides being predominantly rural, it's also home to a large population of Native Hawaiians, who make up nearly half of its 7,400 residents. Other than tiny Niihau, this is the only island where Hawaiians comprise the ethnic majority, and they've worked hard to ensure that the island doesn't fully succumb to the intense tourism pressures that have so affected their neighbors on Maui and Oahu. Many Molokai residents still follow, at least in part, a subsistence lifestyle dependent on hunting and fishing, and they want to retain access to the mountains and sea.

Although its lowlands have been heavily impacted by large-scale agriculture—predominantly pineapple—Molokai's natural interior remains largely uncultivated and intact. The Nature Conservancy manages extensive tracts of native rainforest that are home to numerous rare and endangered species, including plants, birds, and tree snails with beautiful colored shells.

As the fifth-largest of the main Hawaiian Islands, Molokai encompasses just 260 square miles. Despite its small size, its diverse landscape ranges from dry pasturelands to lush tropical valleys and magnificent sheer sea cliffs. It is made up of two distinct volcanic land masses that create a natural division between the dry west end and the lush east end, with an arid central plain between them.

DON'T LEAVE MOLOKAI WITHOUT . . .

Picking up a loaf of fresh-baked Molokai sweet bread. If I were you, I'd get it from Kanemitsu's Bakery, a family-run business that has operated in downtown Kaunakakai for more than 70 years. Better yet, I'd get two loaves. You can easily devour one before your plane leaves the runway. See p. 196.

Buying a bag of Molokai Coffee. The beans are grown on a 500-acre estate that's second in production only to Kauai Coffee. You can choose from five different roasts, but my favorites are Malulani, aptly named for its "heavenly aroma," and Muleskinner, a dark roast that is naturally sun-dried. See p. 203.

Visiting, or at least viewing, Kalaupapa Peninsula. This ruggedly beautiful, isolated coastal area is where Hawaii dumped people with Hansen's disease back in the 19th century. They lived in appalling conditions here until Father Damien, a Belgian priest, devoted himself to their care, eventually contracting the disease himself. The area's now under the National Park Service's jurisdiction, and access is regulated. Once home to about 600 persons, it's now inhabited by some 100 former patients and park workers. See p. 188.

LAY OF THE LAND & A BRIEF HISTORY

Molokai is about 38 miles long and never more than 10 miles wide. Some of the world's tallest sea cliffs, towering 2,000 to 3,000 feet above the shoreline, mark its rugged northern coast. **Kamakou** is the highest peak, rising 4,970 feet above sea level.

East Molokai is where you'll find the main town of **Kaunakakai** and the harbor, as well as the bulk of the resident population. It's also known for its scenic, reef-edged coastline dotted with fishponds that were built by the ancient Hawaiians. **West Molokai** includes the slopes of **Mauna Loa** and a rugged, sandy coastline. Much of the land there is privately owned and inaccessible to visitors, unless they're staying on Molokai Ranch.

Central Molokai is dominated by **Hoolehua,** a Hawaiian Homelands settlement area, as well as agricultural lands. Sugar cane and pineapple were once the main crops in this dry and dusty region, but now coffee and macadamia nuts are cultivated here. Molokai also plays a major role in producing genetically modified organisms or crops (GMOs). Private companies and universities conduct experimental field trials and grow GMO seed crops in Central Molokai.

THE SPECTER OF LEPROSY

Kalaupapa Peninsula comprises the island's northern region. This low, flat finger of land stretches straight out into the sea, with tall, sheer cliffs forming a natural barrier from "topside Molokai," as the rest of the island is known by those who still live here. The 2,000-foot-tall *pali* (cliffs) contributed to the isolation of the peninsula, where those afflicted with leprosy, or Hansen's disease, were exiled, beginning in 1866. It was at this time that Molokai became known as "the Lonely Isle." Over the years, some 8,000 men, women, and children were removed—forcibly at times—from their families, throughout Hawaii, and taken to the peninsula, which Kamehameha V had designated as a settlement for those in the advanced stages of the disease. The first patients were taken to Kalawao on the east end of the peninsula, but by 1895 the last of Kalaupapa's nonafflicted residents had been forced to leave so that a leprosy settlement could be relocated there.

Conditions at the settlement reflect a dark period in Hawaii's history. The residents had inadequate food, shelter, and medical care. For many years, life at Kalawao was characterized by lawlessness, as many residents drowned their sorrow and pain in drunkenness. As stories of the brutish conditions spread throughout the islands, families hid their ill relatives rather than send them to the "living tomb" at Kalaupapa—and so the disease continued to spread.

When Father Damien, a young Belgian priest, arrived at the peninsula in 1873, leprosy was not considered a disease but a crime, and the government was making

an active effort to round up any patients who had not yet been sent to Kalawao. He devoted himself to their care, encouraging them to help themselves by building homes, enforcing order, planting fruit trees, and improving the water supply. Father Damien eventually contracted the disease and died from it. He is buried at Kalaupapa, and his selfless devotion has prompted a campaign to have him named a Catholic saint. Others, too, cared for the patients, including Mother Marianne Cope, who took a vow of silence before she came to the island, and Brother Dutton, who spent more than 44 years here, continuing the work begun by Father Damien.

Kalaupapa was designated a National Historical Park in 1969. Although no one is required to live here anymore due to advances in the treatment of Hansen's disease, the peninsula has about 100 residents, including former patients, most of them elderly, and park employees.

Although most people continue to associate Molokai primarily with Kalaupapa, it had a very different reputation in ancient times. Known as Molokai Pule O'o, or Molokai of the potent prayer, it was an island inhabited by powerful *kahuna* (priests) who were proficient in ancient chants and mystical practices. The chiefs depended on the kahuna to protect the small island from invaders, and the powers of these priests, who reportedly had the ability to pray an opponent to death, were legendary throughout the islands.

Molokai maintained its reputation as a center of mysticism and sorcery until the late 1700s, when it was conquered by Kamehameha as part of his drive to unify all the islands under his rule. Protestant missionaries began to arrive in 1832, but the island remained largely unchanged until 1848, when the Great Mahele provided for the private ownership of land (prior to this time, the concept of private ownership was unknown in Hawaii). Westerners bought some 70,000 acres and turned it into Molokai Ranch.

THE PINEAPPLE, TOURISM & LOCAL RESISTANCE

In 1923 the Libby Corporation introduced pineapple to Molokai. Four years later, Del Monte also opened a large pineapple plantation on the island, and the two companies constructed plantation towns, then imported workers from Japan and the Philippines. This mono-crop agriculture dominated the island's economy and landscape until the early 1980s, when the plantations closed down due to cheap imports of pineapple from Thailand and other countries.

When the Kaluakoi Corporation opened the Molokai Sheraton in the 1970s, on lands it had purchased nearly a decade earlier from the Molokai Ranch, tourism officially arrived. The Kaluakoi Corp. began selling condominiums and homesites adjacent to the resort, but the resort ultimately failed. In 2002 Molokai Ranch bought back the lands and renovated the hotel and part of its golf course.

Although Molokai is just a 20-minute flight from Oahu, its residents have managed to fight plans for luxury homesites, condominiums, and resorts on the west end. Vandals destroyed part of a pipeline that provided the area with water, and residents recently approved a moratorium on tourist development. Because a majority of residents seem to like their rural lifestyle and are committed to its preservation, Molokai now has the reputation of being the last "antidevelopment" island in Hawaii. In the struggle to gain control of this island's destiny, only time will tell if the residents or the developers prevail.

GETTING TO & AROUND MOLOKAI

Molokai's **Hoolehua Airport** is easily, though expensively, reached by air from Honolulu or Maui via the Kahului and West Maui airports. Daily service is provided by **Aloha Island Air** (☎ 800/652-65641; www.alohaairlines.com) and **Hawaiian Airlines** (☎ 800/882-8811; www.hawaiianairlines.com), which offer numerous flights throughout the day and charge between $160 and $210 for the hop. Four commuter airlines charge lower rates, usually $100 round-trip, but also offer fewer flights and use smaller planes that restrict baggage. These include **Pacific Wings** (☎ 800/867-6814; www.pacificwings.com), **Molokai Air Shuttle** (☎ 808/567-6847), **Commercial Flyer** (☎ 888/266-3597 or 808/833-8014), and **Paragon Air** (☎ 808/244-3356; www.paragon-air.com). The last three are true charters, with no regularly scheduled flights.

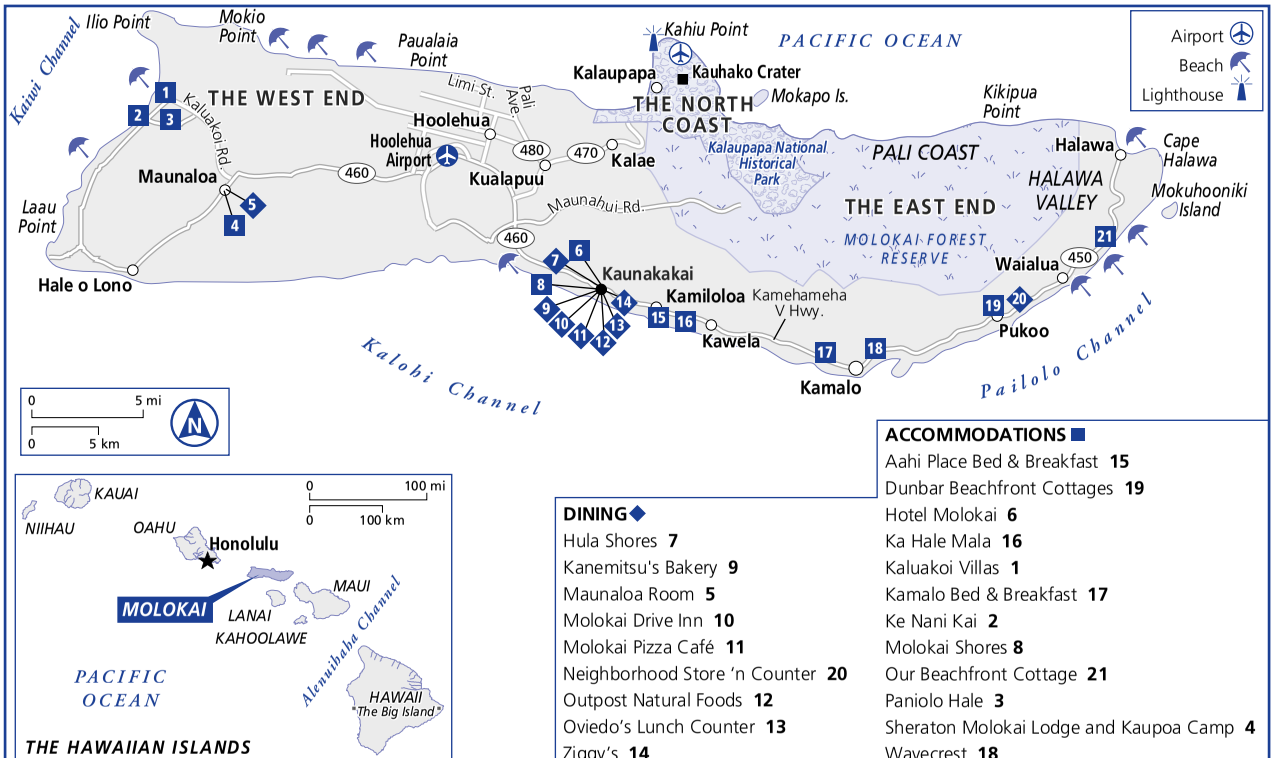
The far less costly **Molokai Princess** (☎ 866/307-6524; molokaiferry.com) provides ferry service between Lahaina (on Maui) and Molokai, with daily morning and evening trips. The 90-minute voyage costs $40 for adults and $20 for children. You can also arrange a number of packages, including a guided tour of the island and a visit to the Kalaupapa Peninsula.

You'll probably want to **rent a car** to get around Molokai because the island has no public transportation. But with only three car-rental agencies in operation here, you won't get much of a break on cost (expect an average of $45 per day, unless you rent for a week). ***Important:*** Make advance reservations for a vehicle to ensure availability!

Since Molokai has a lot of dirt roads, four-wheel-drive comes in handy if you plan to explore the island, but be sure to check with the agency about restrictions on off-road travel. You'll find booths and base yards for **Dollar Rent a Car** (☎ 800/800-4000 or 808/567-6877; www.dollar.com) and **Budget** (☎ 800/527-7000 or

Property Management Companies

One of the island's better property management firms is **Molokai Beachfront Condominiums** (☎ 800/600-4158 or 808/553-3666; www.molokai-beachfront-condos.com) because it allows guests to choose from a wide selection of condos and enforces high standards of cleanliness and maintenance. It also offers a number of unique, personalized services—including a Hawaiian lei greeting at the airport or ferry dock, airport/ferry shuttle service, and the services of a personal chef and professional photographer. If you don't need flowers and soufflés, be sure to compare their rates with **Molokai Rentals** (☎ 888/282-3459; www.molokairentals.com), another fine firm that exclusively handles condo properties. Two more recommended companies, **Molokai Resorts** (☎ 800/600-4158 or 808/553-3666; www.molokairesorts.com) and **Molokai Realty** (☎ 866/309-9001 or 808/553-9000; www.molokairealty.com), manage both condos and free-standing vacation homes. All do a good job of looking after their properties and are worth checking out; go with the one that offers you the best rate on a condo you favor.



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- Paniolo Hale **3**
- Sheraton Molokai Lodge and Kaupoa Camp **4**
- Wavecrest **18**

808/567-6877; www.budget.com) at Hoolehua Airport; both rent a range of new vehicles. **Island Kine Auto Rental** (☎ 866/527-7368 or 808/553-5242; http://molokai-car-rental.com) is in Kaunakakai but provides a courtesy pick-up at either the airport or the pier. It rents used vehicles in good condition, for about 20% less than the new car-rental companies.

For another transportation option, consider **Molokai Off-Road Tours and Taxi** (☎ 808/553-3369; www.molokai.com/offroad.com), which provides service between the airport and Kaunakakai for $7 per person, with a three-person minimum, or **Molokai Outdoors** (☎ 808/553-4477; www.molokai-outdoors.com), which charges a flat fee of $23. And if you're traveling very light, think about biking as a budget option for getting around. (See p. 206 for information on bicycle-rental companies.)

ACCOMMODATIONS, BOTH STANDARD & NOT

Molokai has some of the lowest-priced lodgings in Hawaii, and also some of the best-maintained properties. I have never encountered any dives, and have invariably found lodgings that are fresh, clean, and comfortable enough for a stay of a week or more. You'll find the best selection in Kaunakakai and along the southeast coastline, which is also where most Molokai residents live. Because this area is the island's windward side, it gets a bit more rain and clouds, which in turn create lush vegetation. The west side is sunny, but very dry and isolated; you'll appreciate units with kitchens given the lack of eateries in the area.

Although the lodgings options in other chapters are organized by island region, my picks for accommodations in this chapter are divided by lodging type. I think the variety of accommodations on this island is more interesting and important to your experience than the region in which you stay.

CONDOMINIUMS

Having said that, your choice of condominium properties is largely dictated by where you want to stay. Condos are comparably priced, with near-identical amenities and, sometimes, design. Three properties—Kaluakoi Villas (p. 193), Ke Nani Kai (p. 193), and Paniolo Hale (p. 193)—are available on the west end, which is isolated but warm and sunny. Wavecrest (p. 193) is on the east side, which is a bit remote (about 13 miles from Kaunakakai). Molokai Shores (below) is right in the center of town. All of the properties offer ocean views, except for Paniolo Hale, which accounts for its lower rates. Typically, you can get a reduced rate for stays longer than a week and better rates if you deal with a rental company.

Condos have a distinct advantage over B&Bs and hotels (to my mind) because they come with kitchen facilities, which allow you to save substantially on food costs.

$–$$ Molokai Shores (Kamehameha Hwy.; ☎ 800/535-0085 or 808/553-5954; http://marcresorts.com/properties) is the only condo project right in town. Despite its central location—within walking distance of the town's markets and boutiques—the three-story building is quiet. It's also comfortable, extremely well kept, and each unit boasts an ocean view. The apartments themselves, one- or two-bedroom units, are bright, spacious, carpeted, and furnished with the rattan furniture that's ubiquitous to Hawaii. You'll find full kitchens stocked with all the amenities needed for cooking, as well as TV, stereo, and ceiling fans. A few units feature additional beds in a loft area if you need to accommodate more guests. The

property has an oceanfront swimming pool, common barbecue, and outdoor dining area, all of which add to the property's homey feel. Prices range from $100 to $175 per night, based on the season and the number of bedrooms you need.

$–$$ If you're looking for a hideaway within the cool environs of the east side, **Wavecrest** (Rte. 450, mile marker 13; ☎ 800/600-4158 or 808/553-3666; www.wavecresthawaii.com) is a fine choice. This four-story condominium resort on the beach faces a picturesque lagoon (visible from most units, but not suitable for swimming), and the prices are appealing; you can rent a two-bedroom, 1½-bathroom unit that sleeps up to six for $150, with a 2-night minimum stay and an $85 cleaning fee. An even better deal is a one-bedroom with sleeper sofa that accommodates four for $75 per night, plus a $45 cleaning fee. (Discounts are offered for online bookings and monthly stays.) Each unit is individually owned, so the decor varies, but most often you'll find some variation on white rattan and tropical prints. The units I visited were spacious, very clean, and in good condition, with hardwood floors, ceiling fans, full kitchens, color TV, stereos, and other modern amenities—except telephones. I enjoyed hanging out on the property, which is attractively landscaped and has more built-in activities than the other condos, including a putting green, shuffleboard court, two night-lit tennis courts, and a small swimming pool with an ocean view. Laundry facilities are available on each floor.

In Maunaloa, on the sunny west end, there are three small condominium properties that offer clean, comfortable, and pleasant accommodations. The differences among them lie not so much in the units themselves, but in the properties, which offer a range of amenities that affect the price.

$–$$ **Paniolo Hale** (Lio Place, Maunaloa; ☎ 800/367-2984 or 808/552-2731) is the newest and nicest of the west-end condo projects, in part because it's set among trees along the Kaluakoi Golf Course and bordered by secluded Kepuhi Beach (although no ocean views are available). I also like the look of this place best: The 15 units have unfinished wood exteriors that create a rustic feel, but inside they're clean and modern, with such features as oak floors, open beam cathedral ceilings, refrigerators with ice makers, DVD players, washer-dryers, and dishwashers. A private, screened lanai is off the living-room area, and there are barbecue pits as well as a small pool on the property. Considering the quality of the construction, the rates are a terrific deal: Studios for two start at $50 a night, and some of the two-story, two-bedroom units are furnished with enough beds to sleep six but rent for just $135 to $150. All units are individually owned, and therefore decor and rental rates vary. One final enticement: Many of the larger units have hot tubs.

My second choice in this area, **Ke Nani Kai** (Kepuhi Place, Maunaloa; ☎ 800/535-0085 or 808/552-2761), has one- and two-bedroom condos that sleep two to four persons for between $90 to $125 per night, while a unit that accommodates six rents for $135 per night. All units are quite large, with private lanais, full kitchens, and a variety of sleeping arrangements, as well as ocean and mountain views, high-speed Internet, free long-distance telephone calls, and DVD units in the rooms. The property has concierge service, a swimming pool, and tennis courts. Expect a 3-night minimum and a $65 cleaning fee.

$$–$$$ **Kaluakoi Villas** (1131 Kaluakoi Rd., Maunaloa; ☎ 800/367-5004 or 808/552-2721; www.castleresorts.com) is furnished in a more sterile fashion, typical of

hotel rooms, which along with its higher prices, ranks it firmly in third place. Still, this two-story, low-density resort has nicely landscaped grounds fronted by a long, white-sand beach (dangerous for swimming), and boasts an oceanfront pool, as well as a laundromat, gas barbecues, and a convenience store. Here you can rent a studio or one-bedroom unit that sleeps two to four for rates ranging from $135 to $205, depending on whether you want a partial or full ocean view. (Discounts of 20% are available on the property's website.) Each condo is equipped with a phone, TV/VCR, bathroom with tub and shower, ceiling fans, and a kitchenette stocked with enough cookware to prepare full meals.

VACATION HOMES

Free-standing vacation homes range in size and price and are generally handled by property management firms or individual homeowners. Most abundant are two-bedroom, two-bathroom homes that sleep four or five for $150 to $225 per night, with one-time cleaning fees of $75 to $100. These are better choices for families or groups than for couples or solo travelers. See my recommendations above (p. 190) for trustworthy firms that handle vacation rentals; to contact owners directly, the best website is VacationRentalsbyOwner.com (www.vrbo.com).

Note: Most places in rural Molokai do not use street addresses because there is no residential mail delivery. Visitors will be given specific mile-marker directions upon rental.

$–$$ On the island's east end, **Our Beachfront Cottage** ★★ (☎ 907/376-3959; martylen@mtaonline.net) is a secluded two-bedroom cottage on a pretty white-sand beach (approximately 19 miles from Kaunakakai). Everything here is designed for comfort, from the well-equipped full kitchen (with washing machine and a clothesline) to the spacious, brightly furnished rooms to the "soap in the sun" outdoor shower (just private enough). It rents for $160 per night, with a 3-night minimum and a one-time $100 cleaning fee.

$$ Equally desirable are the **Dunbar Beachfront Cottages** ★★ (☎ 800/673-0520 or 808/558-8153; kipandleslie@molokai-beachfront-cottages.com; no credit cards). These two private homes—with an enviable location in Kainalu, close to lush Halawa Valley—are right on a beach that offers safe swimming, eye-popping snorkeling, and dramatic views of Maui, Lanai, and Kahoolawe. Each cottage has two bedrooms and one bathroom and sleeps four, though the Pauwala house will be better for persons with disabilities because it sits at ground level (access to the Puunana house requires you to walk up a short flight of stairs). Both homes are comfortably furnished (think tropical decor) with color TV, washer-dryer, and full kitchens as well as the all-important covered lanai. Rates are slightly higher here at $170 per night, with a 3-night minimum and a $75 cleaning fee.

BED & BREAKFASTS

$ Ka Hale Mala (5 miles east of Kaunakakai; ☎ 808/553-9009; www.molokai-bnb.com; no credit cards) is the island's lowest-priced B&B, charging just $70 per night. It's my favorite choice in this category because of the gracious and helpful hosts you'll meet here (not to mention the excellent value). The price goes up to $80 if you add breakfast, which is reasonable considering the hearty spread of banana pancakes, fruit cobbler, and similar homemade treats laid out each morning on a

pleasant lanai with a mountain view. Connected to the main house, yet still very private, the 900-square-foot, four-room unit is comfy, with a bedroom, full kitchen, and bathroom that has both a shower and tub. Two more can sleep on two daybeds in the living room; you'll pay $15 for each extra guest or $20 with breakfast, so it's a good deal for families. The owners make an effort to ensure a pleasant stay; they'll meet you at the airport and give you a full orientation on Molokai's hot spots, as well as provide beach towels, a hammock, a barbecue, and other amenities.

$ Only slightly more expensive is **Aahi Place Bed & Breakfast** (2 miles east of Kaunakakai; ☎ 808/553-8033; no credit cards), at $75 per night for two persons and $20 more for each additional guest. It's a good choice if you're seeking privacy and a true retreat; you'll get a separate cottage in a lushly landscaped setting (with no television or phone to interrupt your peace and quiet). Although the cedar paneling makes the cottage a bit dark, it's very clean and furnished with two double beds, a modern bathroom, a full kitchen, and a washing machine plus clothesline. If you stay a minimum of 3 nights, you won't be charged the $30 cleaning fee, and after 6 nights, you can stay a seventh night for free. Freshly baked breads, fruits in season, and coffee are available for an optional continental breakfast that costs $10 more per person.

$ On the east side, at the base of Molokai's highest peak, is the lushly landscaped **Kamalo Bed & Breakfast** (10 miles east of Kaunakakai; ☎ 808/558-8236; www.molokai.com/kamalo). This cottage on a 5-acre parcel, planted heavily with fruit trees, ensures plenty of privacy. For $95 per night, with a 2-night minimum, you'll enjoy a king-size bed and full kitchen, a nice deck, and a clean, modern bathroom with shower and tub, as well as an outdoor shower (but no television set). For a do-it-yourself breakfast, tasty homemade breads and tropical fruits picked from the yard are provided. The unit itself isn't much nicer than its competition, but you're paying for the scenery and privacy here.

RESORTS

$–$$ Harkening back to a different era when tourism wasn't quite so glitzy, **Hotel Molokai** ★★ (Kamehameha V Hwy., Kaunakakai; ☎ 800/535-0085 or 808/553-5347; www.molokaihotel.com) is a unique commodity in Hawaii: quaint, quiet, and old-fashioned. If you're looking for a resort, this place is the best deal you'll find. Rates range from $90 for a unit with a queen-size bed to $130 for one with a queen and two twin beds. Managed by Marc Resorts Hawaii, the rooms at this distinctive property are actually 45 separate oceanfront bungalows, designed and decorated in a Polynesian style. Some of the units have kitchenettes; all include a private lanai, TV, phone, and minifridge. There's no air-conditioning, but the bungalows are positioned to catch the cooling trade winds. A pool, a restaurant, and a lounge are on-site.

$$$–$$$$ The two lodging choices offered by **Molokai Ranch**—the **Sheraton Molokai Lodge** and **The Beach Village** (Maunaloa; ☎ 877/726-4656 or 808/552-2741; http://www.molokairanch.com)—are more expensive than other lodgings on the island, but they're unique. Formerly managed by Sheraton, they were recently taken over by Starwood Hotels, which changed the name of what was formerly called the Kaupoa Camp to The Beach Village, but otherwise implemented few

alterations. **The Beach Village,** on a beautiful white-sand crescent beach, rents 40 two-bedroom "tentalows"—wood-framed structures covered with canvas—that are furnished with top-quality queen-size beds, composting toilets, and open-air bathrooms with a sink, a toilet, and a shower. This is rustic luxury; there's no phone or TV, but solar power generates hot water and electricity for ceiling fans and lighting. Daily maid service and substantial buffet meals, served in a covered, ocean-front pavilion (kids under 12 eat free), are additional comforts, along with deck furniture on your private lanai and hammocks and lounge chairs for the beach. Rates range from $208 to $295 per day. You can take a shuttle to the two-story **Molokai Lodge,** designed to resemble a ranch house from the 1920s and 1930s, replete with kitschy Hawaiiana memorabilia. Here, the 22 luxurious guest suites—furnished with modern amenities, spacious bathrooms with tub and shower, a sitting area, and firm yet cushy beds that make you want to linger—flank a main hall that features a rough-hewn timber interior and large fireplace, where it's pleasant to linger in the evening hours and listen to live island-style music. The property offers a spa, a fitness center, a swimming pool, a bar with a billiards table, a restaurant, an upstairs library, and numerous activities to fill all your waking moments. It's lovely and genteel, but it's hard to justify rates ranging from $298 to $450 when you can stay in other perfectly good lodgings for so much less.

CAMPING

$ Rural Molokai is the kind of place that invites camping, and you can pitch your tent at four very different campgrounds, although I only recommend two (the other two are located in inconvenient, less pleasant settings). If you want a cool, forested locale, your best bet is **Palaau State Park,** which overlooks the Kalaupapa Peninsula, at the end of Route 470. It has covered pavilions, tables, and restrooms, and you can camp free for a week with a permit from the **Division of State Parks** (☎ 808/567-6923). For a delightful coastal setting on Molokai's largest beach and one of the longest stretches of white sand in Hawaii, you can't beat **Papohaku Beach Park** (right on a beach on the island's west end). It also provides full facilities, and it's usually as quiet and empty as Palaau. Unfortunately, this isn't a good swimming beach because it has no protective reef and is subject to strong rip currents. You're limited to 3 consecutive days under a **County Parks and Recreation** (☎ 808/553-3204) permit that costs $3 for adults and just 50¢ for kids under 17.

DINING FOR ALL TASTES

You won't find many places to eat on Molokai, but most of the ones you do find are low-priced. Expect simple hearty meals, friendly service, and casual surroundings. If you're staying out of town, plan to buy groceries and cook. Although Kaunakakai isn't far from anyplace on Molokai, it quickly becomes tiresome to drive there whenever hunger strikes. And if you're sightseeing, buy snacks when you come across them, because it may be a while before you have another opportunity.

IN & AROUND KAUNAKAI

$ Supercasual and a favorite among locals, **Kanemitsu's Bakery** ✦ (Ala Malama St., Kaunakakai; ☎ 808/553-5855; closed Tues) is a great choice for a low-cost meal or baked goods. You can get a sandwich on legendary bread for about $4; pancakes, eggs, Portuguese sausage, fried rice, local-style plate lunches, or burgers

cost between $5 and $7. The bakery is open from 5:30am to 6:30pm, but the lunch counter shuts down at 11:30am.

$ Molokai Drive Inn (15 Kamoi St., Kaunakakai; ☎ 808/553-5655) serves standards like burgers, chili dogs, bacon and eggs, and pancakes, as well as more unusual fare—including fried rice, Chinese stir fry, saimen noodle soup, and oxtail soup—for $5 to $7. Open for three meals a day (6am–8pm), you can order take-out, or eat on the premises at one of the covered picnic tables outdoors or few small tables inside.

$ For Filipino fare served from a steam table, head to **Oviedo's Lunch Counter** (Puali St., Kaunakakai; ☎ 808/553-5014). Here, you pick and choose from pork or turkey *adobo,* chicken papaya, tripe stew, and other meat-based ethnic entrees, as well as various vegetable dishes, to create a meal for under $8. It's clean, but the decor is a bit dumpy, so it's best to take your food out. Open daily from 10am to 5pm.

$ You'll find tasty vegetarian fare at **Outpost Natural Foods** ✯ (Kaunakakai; ☎ 808/553-3377), where burritos, salads, tempeh burgers, and daily specials are available for $4 to $6. Smoothies and fresh juices round out the simple menu, which is only available on weekdays between 10am and 3pm.

$–$$ Ziggy's (10 Mohala St., Kaunakakai; ☎ 808/553-8166) serves big breakfasts that'll stick to your ribs, as well as a lunch and dinner menu featuring burgers, fresh island fish, ribs, steaks, and other simple entrees for $7 to $15. The food is average, but the homemade desserts are first-rate. Sharing the premises with a sports bar and pool room, Ziggy's tends to get loud and lively as the night wears on.

$–$$ Preparing its food with a bit more flair than other Molokai restaurants is the **Molokai Pizza Café** ✯✯ (Kaunakakai Place, Kaunakakai; ☎ 808/553-3288). In addition to gourmet pizzas that range from $9 to $24, this cheery eatery offers deli sandwiches, pasta, barbecued ribs, and fresh fish, as well as Mexican and Hawaiian specials (entrees cost between $9 and $15). Try to save room for the excellent homemade pie. You can eat in, take out, or have your meal delivered.

$–$$$ At **Hula Shores** ✯✯ (Hwy. 450, Kaunakakai; ☎ 808/553-5347), the restaurant at Hotel Molokai, you can enjoy three excellent meals a day in a casual, open-air setting overlooking the ocean. If it's a clear day, you can even spot Lanai in the distance. As the only "fancy" restaurant in town, it's often busy; reservations are recommended. The dinner menu features such items as teriyaki chicken, pork ribs, coconut shrimp, fresh fish, steaks, and daily specials for less than $20, including a trip to the salad bar. On weekend nights, you'll hear good live Hawaiian-style music.

EAST END

$ If you happen to be staying on the east end, the lunch counter at the **Neighborhood Store 'n Counter** (Pukoo; ☎ 808/558-8498) is the only place to buy a meal. You can get simple breakfasts, sandwiches, burgers, and plate lunches for $4 to $7. It's not fantastic, but beggars can't be choosers. It's open from 8am to 6pm every day except Wednesday, when you'll have to forage in the convenience store if you're hungry.

WEST END

$$–$$$ The west end also has a dearth of eateries. Although Molokai Ranch's **Maunaloa Room** (100 Maunaloa Hwy., Maunaloa; ☎ 808/627-8082) is pretty much the only dining option, its fare is quite tasty and it offers delightful views of the ocean and ranchlands. You can dine indoors or out on the open-air veranda. The menu features "Molokai regional cuisine," prepared primarily with local ingredients. Fresh-fish specials, New York steak, lemon-grass-mango chicken breast, kalua-style duck lumpia, and salt-fried Molokai shrimp are priced from $20 to $28, which is pretty upscale for Molokai, but reasonable considering the quality of the food.

WHY YOU'RE HERE: MOLOKAI'S BEACHES

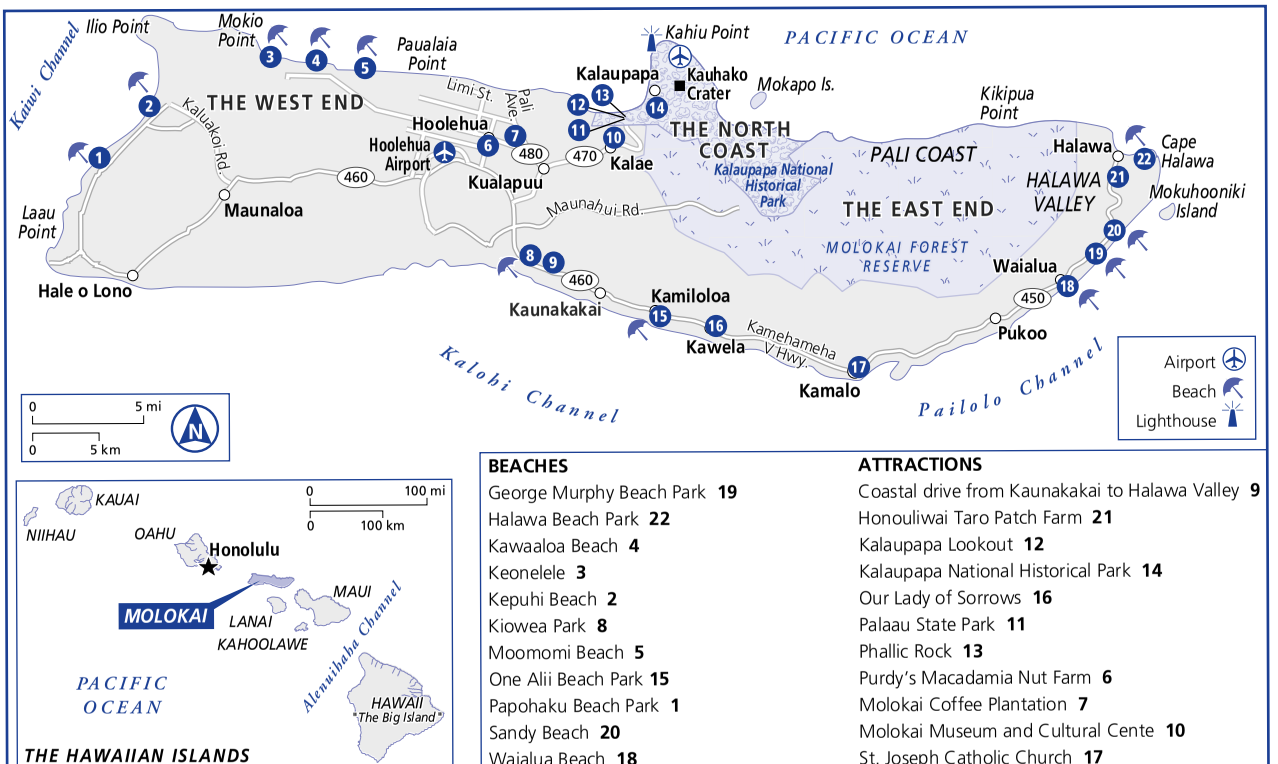
For a small island, Molokai's coastline is remarkably diverse, ranging from long rolling sand dunes to foreboding sea cliffs that are among the world's highest, at 2,000 feet. The island also boasts Hawaii's only continuous barrier reef, which spans 28 miles on the south side. Its eastern shore is distinguished by a string of 62 ancient fishponds and picturesque coves edged by white-sand pocket beaches. This varied environment creates dramatic and lovely scenery, but you'll find relatively few beaches open to the public due to the difficulty of securing access through private coastal lands.

Route 450 follows the long eastern coastline, which has an abundance of rock-walled ponds where the ancient Hawaiians raised fish. Although most have fallen into disrepair, the carefully fitted stones that form the walls are still visible. Some of the beaches along this stretch are named for ponds, including **One Alii Beach Park** kids, which lies about 4 miles east of Kaunakakai. This narrow, white-sand beach has a shallow, protected swimming area that's ideal for small kids (and a safe place to try snorkeling). Restrooms, picnic tables and grills, and a small campground round out the amenities at this 12-acre facility, which was the first public beach park on Molokai.

Drive another 15 miles northeast and you'll reach the next desirable public strand, **Waialua Beach** ★, also known as **Peabody's Beach.** A freshwater stream enters the ocean here, providing a natural way to rinse off the salt. This roadside beach is good for swimming and snorkeling but has no facilities.

Just a mile or so further, at mile marker 20, you'll find one of the east end's best beaches. Formally named **George Murphy Beach Park** ★ kids for the owner of Puu O Hoku Ranch, who granted permission for public use of his lands, it was overhauled by the Molokai Jaycees, who turned this former dump site into a sandy swimming area for residents. Murphy's is a pleasant roadside beach park, with three picnic pavilions shaded by ironwood trees, but no restroom facilities. The ocean bottom here is mostly rocky, but shallow and protected, providing safe swimming for children. Fishing, snorkeling, and diving are also popular pastimes, but don't venture beyond the reef, where the current is strong except on rare, very calm days.

About a mile further along the coast is **Sandy Beach,** a small, white-sand roadside beach. Its near-shore waters are deep enough for swimming and protected by a shallow reef, making it a good spot for families. This is a popular spot with both tourists and locals, but there are no facilities on-site. Fortunately, you can find restrooms in another few miles when Route 450 ends at **Halawa Beach Park** ★, a scenic black-sand beach. All the amenities you could ask for are here: restrooms, pavilions, and a picnic area. The shoreline here comprises two beaches that front Halawa Bay, a popular surfing area; swimming is safer on the western end. Although



BEACHES

George Murphy Beach Park **19**
Halawa Beach Park **22**
Kawaaloa Beach **4**
Keonelele **3**
Kepuhi Beach **2**
Kiowea Park **8**
Moomomi Beach **5**
One Alii Beach Park **15**
Papohaku Beach Park **1**
Sandy Beach **20**
Waialua Beach **18**

ATTRACTIONS

Coastal drive from Kaunakakai to Halawa Valley **9**
Honouliwai Taro Patch Farm **21**
Kalaupapa Lookout **12**
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Palaau State Park **11**
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Purdy's Macadamia Nut Farm **6**
Molokai Coffee Plantation **7**
Molokai Museum and Cultural Cente **10**
St. Joseph Catholic Church **17**

Watch Your Tootsies

Although east-end beaches are sandy along the shoreline, the near-shore waters usually contain coral—which makes for good snorkeling but unpleasant barefoot strolls. Coral is rough and sharp, and it can inflict nasty cuts that tend to fester because the living organisms that comprise coral get into the wound and contribute to infection. ***Important:*** Wear reef walkers, Japanese fishing tabis, or old sneakers when you're at the beach. And even if you're protected, try not to tread on the reef unnecessarily as it takes just nine tramplings to kill a coral head.

the water is clean, it may appear murky due to runoff from Halawa Stream, which runs through the lushly beautiful amphitheater valley that adjoins the beach.

On the opposite end of the island lies **Moomomi Beach,** where you'll find the Hawaiian Islands' most extensive sand-dune complex, managed by the Nature Conservancy. It's an ecological treasure trove, home to a number of endangered coastal plants (including four that only exist on this beach), and an important breeding ground for sea turtles. Perhaps most interesting are what archaeologists have turned up here: the bones of prehistoric and probably flightless birds, perfectly preserved in the dry sands. Today, Moomomi—ungroomed, with a uniquely desolate beauty—still looks like a place where prehistoric animals could roam. If you're interested in learning more about the area's ecology, contact the **Nature Conservancy** (☎ 808/553-5236; www.nature.org) for more details and a schedule of monthly guided nature walks.

Although the entire 3-mile stretch of coastline here is commonly called Moomomi, it actually comprises three separate beaches. Furthest west is **Keonelele,** where you'll often see interesting driftwood brought ashore by high surf and brisk trade winds. **Kawaaloa,** a crescent-shaped beach fronting a large bay, lies in the middle, offering good swimming on its eastern end. **Moomomi Beach** also borders a bay that shares its name, although the swimming here is generally more protected and much safer for children. It has a large pavilion used as a community recreation center, but otherwise lacks facilities. To reach this remote shoreline, head west out of Hoolehua on Farrington Avenue. The avenue becomes a very rutted and bumpy dirt road, which you'll follow for 2 miles until it forks. Take the right fork for another half mile to the beach. If the weather has been wet, you'll need a four-wheel-drive vehicle to navigate the last 1½ miles. **Kiowea Park** lies along Maunaloa Highway, between Kaunakakai and Kalamaula. Although swimming is marginal at best, the beach park is noteworthy for its setting: an extensive coconut grove that dates back to the mid-1800s. Owned by the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, it has restrooms, picnic tables, and a pavilion.

Fronting the Sheraton Molokai Hotel is **Kepuhi Beach,** a long, wide stretch of white sand that can disappear entirely during periods of high surf. Swimming is safe only on the calmest days, and even then, be cautious of strong currents running along the shore. The small public parking lot and access way lie just beyond the hotel's tennis courts.

THE TOP SIGHTS & ATTRACTIONS

In the minds of many travelers, Molokai is defined by one place: the **Kalaupapa National Historic Park** ★★★ (☎ 808/567-6802; www.nps.gov/kala).

It's here that for more than 100 years, sufferers of Hansen's disease, better known as leprosy, were taken to live in primitive conditions shielded from contact with the rest of society. The disease, which afflicts its sufferers with putrid-smelling open sores and can in many cases lead to blindness and loss of limbs, was the most feared of the diseases brought to Hawaii by Caucasian settlers. *Mai ho' oko' awale,* translated as the "separating sickness," tore families apart as afflicted members were taken from their loved ones—often forcibly—and simply dropped on this peninsula without food, shelter, or tools. Some of the sea captains who were charged with bringing people here were so scared of contracting the disease that they wouldn't even land; instead, they forced their charges to jump into the water and many perished trying to get to shore. Conditions improved with the arrival of Catholic missionary Father Damien in 1873. A talented carpenter and a driven administrator, he built over 300 small houses and devoted his life to improving the lot of the peninsula's outcasts. It's still possible today to see some of the little whitewashed houses and churches that Damien built.

The natural setting of Kalaupapa is as dramatic as the tales of these unfortunate sufferers. A lushly green spit of land, created by a lava bubble that erupted from the sea floor millennia ago, it tenuously connects the flat peninsula to the towering 1,700-foot sea cliffs of the main island, forming a natural prison. Rough seas and the impossible-to-climb cliffs kept residents in; today, visitors must still surmount these obstacles to visit the roadless settlement.

Access to the peninsula is strictly regulated, primarily to protect the residents' privacy, but also the endangered native coastal plant and animal species. Though the disease in not highly contagious, no one under 16 is allowed, and all visitors must have permits from the state Department of Health to enter the Kalaupapa settlement. For the general public, these permits are arranged by **Damien Tours** ✰✰✰ (☎ 808/567-6171), owned and operated by a Kalaupapa resident. Along with the permits comes a full tour (which is the only way to visit the peninsula, other than as a resident's guest). Guides frequently are former patients, some of whom still live here even though they are free to go and can manage the illness with medicine. They offer poignant and compelling firsthand accounts of their lives in Kalaupapa and their experiences with Hansen's disease.

If you take the tour, you'll board an old school bus for a somewhat rushed 3-hour drive past the Kalawao and Kalaupapa settlements, which includes frequent stops. Among the stops are a bookstore run by a resident and St. Philomena, a church built by Father Damien, the Catholic priest who tended the people with Hansen's disease for 16 years before dying from the disease. You'll also visit his grave. Although the Belgian priest's remains were later exhumed and returned to his native land, under the Pope's directive, his right hand was sent back to Kalaupapa as a relic. He is now being considered by the Vatican for sainthood. The National Park Service maintains a small visitor center and a number of informative exhibit panels that are included on the tour. You'll conclude with a picnic lunch at Judd Park, which offers spectacular views of the tall sea cliffs that comprise the northeastern coastline.

Getting to the Kalaupapa settlement is an adventure in itself. You can arrive one of three ways: by air, by foot, or by mule. I'd recommend the latter; with the **Molokai Mule Ride** ✰✰ (☎ 800/567-7550 or 808/567-6088; www.muleride.com; $150 per person), you'll experience a bumpy ride down that provides enough of an adrenaline rush to compete with any roller coaster. After the first jolt and glimpse of the sheer drop off to the side, you'll grow to appreciate these

sturdy, surefooted animals as they carry you down, and then back up, a narrow, 3-mile trail carved into the face of a 1,600-foot-high cliff that separates the peninsula from the uplands. The ride is offered Monday through Saturday. You'll leave the stables at 8am and return around 3:30pm, experiencing about 1½ hours of actual mule-riding time. The $150 fee includes lunch. Riders must weigh less than 240 pounds. You'll need to make reservations at least 2 weeks in advance, because only 25 mules per day make the trek and the tour fills up quickly.

You also can hike the trail and its 26 switchbacks, a strenuous trek that takes about 1½ to 2 hours each way at a pace that allows you to enjoy the view. I'd recommend starting your trek before 8am, so you're not sharing the road with the mules (or dodging their droppings as you trek down; no way to avoid that on the way up though). The path starts just north of the mule stables, off Highway 470.

If either option seems like too much effort, you can fly to the peninsula from Hoolehua Airport and take the ground tour for $119. The air tour is arranged through Damien Tours (see above). Those flying in from Maui should contact **Paragon Air** (☎ 808/244-3356; www.paragon-air.com; $279 round-trip with a tour); Honolulu visitors can make the hop aboard **Pacific Wings** (☎ 888/575-4546 or 808/873-0877; www.pacificwings.com; $215 round-trip with a tour).

Visitors with limited time (or stamina) can still see the peninsula from afar at the **Kalaupapa Lookout** ★★★, which offers stunning views of the large volcanic crater and settlement. An interpretive plaque at the site points out the most significant sights and tells a bit about the history of the peninsula. From this eagle's-eye perch at the tiptop of the cliffs (a thrilling place to stand), you'll also see the historic lighthouse, which once had the most powerful beam in the Pacific (it now houses an electric light beacon). The Lookout is in the center of **Palaau State Park** ★★ (at the end of Rte. 240), which comprises 234 acres of ironwood and eucalyptus forests at an elevation of 1,600 feet. It's a sweet little park that's ideal for a picnic and a stroll beneath the trees. Be sure to take the short walk to **Phallic Rock** ★ (Kauleo Nanahoa), a larger-than-life natural stone representation of the male organ that's been, er, enhanced by human sculptors to assume its ready-for-action pose. One of the largest such rocks in the islands, Hawaiian legend says that it is inhabited by Nanahoa, the male fertility god who assumed the current form after a fight with his wife that turned them both to stone. For centuries, women hoping to conceive have come here to leave offerings and camp overnight beside the stone.

THE ISLAND'S EAST SIDE

Besides St. Philomena in Kalaupapa, Father Damien built two other churches on Molokai's east side. The older of the two is **Our Lady of Sorrows** (Rte. 450, about 14 miles east of Kaunakakai), originally constructed in 1874, restored in 1966, and still used today. The simple little structure, surrounded by coconut trees, features fine pen-and-ink drawings depicting the stations of the cross that were imported from Holland. The other is **St. Joseph Catholic Church** (Rte. 450, about 10½ miles east of town), an even tinier chapel—about 16 by 30 feet—with a very simple wooden altar that was built in 1876 and restored in 1995. The grounds include a metal sculpture of Father Damien.

Route 450, where both churches are located, offers the **32-mile coastal drive from Kaunakakai to Halawa Valley** ★★ that's well known as one of Molokai's scenic treasures. Allow yourself plenty of time to traverse the narrow, winding road, which tightly hugs the eastern coast. In a number of places, the road shrinks

down to one lane, and in other spots, a guardrail is all that separates you from a sheer drop off into the sea. The string of ancient fishponds and numerous offshore rocks add to the drive's distinctive beauty. The road ends at Halawa Valley, a lush, tropical oasis that fronts a large bay and broad, sandy beach. It's one of four amphitheater valleys along the north shore, but the only one accessible by car.

Shortly before you reach Halawa, at the 20-mile marker on Route 450, is **Honouliwai Taro Patch Farm** ★★ (☎ 808/558-8922; jimcallahan49@hotmail.com). Owner Lee Callahan offers information about cultivating taro, the ancient Hawaiian food staple, and introduces you to her water buffalo, Big Foot. You can also wander around the flooded *loi* (fields) where taro is grown. It's quite scenic, and it's one of the few places in Hawaii where you can get close to taro fields. Plus, hearing about Lee's take on rural life, especially as it compares to her native Thailand, is fun. Call ahead or e-mail to make a reservation ($25 fee).

CENTRAL MOLOKAI

Since Molokai still has a strong agricultural base, some of its finest visitor attractions are farm enterprises, located primarily in the central part of the island. They're all worth a visit, offering tremendous insight into what goes into producing the foods we all take for granted—and they serve samples! One of my favorites is **Purdy's Macadamia Nut Farm** (Lihipali Ave., off Rte. 480 in Hoolehua; ☎ 808/567-6601; Tues–Fri 9:30am–3:30pm, Sat 10am–2pm; free), where you can tour the small orchard and learn about the secret life of macadamia trees, which don't assume maturity until they're a full decade old. The owners will talk you through all stages of the growth cycle (it's interesting, trust me) and speak about their farming methods, which eschew pesticides and other forms of human interference. You'll also sample raw and roasted nuts, as well as honey and other island products.

Another fun place to go, not far from Purdy's, is **Molokai Coffee Plantation** (☎ 800/709-BEAN or 808/567-9241; www.molokaicoffee.com), a 500-acre coffee farm on Route 470 in Kualapuu that's second in production only to Kauai Coffee. If you want to take a 45-to-60-minute walking tour of the orchards and the processing and roasting operations, call ahead to make a reservation. Or, if you don't want to be held to a schedule, just drop by the coffee/gift shop anytime from 10am to 5pm on weekdays.

If you'd rather learn about farming without setting foot in a field, the **Molokai Museum and Cultural Center** ★ (☎ 808/567-6436; Mon–Sat 10am–2pm; $2.50, $1 for children) is worth a stop. It's in the R.W. Meyer Sugar Mill, built in 1878 and now on the National Register of Historic Places, in the tiny town of Kalae, about 2½ miles northwest of Kualapuu on Highway 470. This low-key facility includes restored sugar-processing equipment and graphics that depict how cane was cultivated and then processed into raw sugar. It also relates the island's short-lived flirtation with sugar. The permanent exhibits are supplemented with special festivals (including a taro fest and an annual music festival), as well as classes on such old-fashioned arts as ukulele making and weaving.

THE OTHER MOLOKAI

Aside from the privately owned island of Niihau, which is inhabited almost entirely by Native Hawaiians, you'll find a higher percentage of Hawaiians on Molokai than elsewhere in the state. Native Hawaiians comprise about 48% of

Molokai's population, making it the only island where the indigenous culture flourishes in its true form, not the packaged variety sold by tourism officials.

You'll hear people speaking Hawaiian, but more often pidgin English, the local dialect developed to facilitate communication among diverse ethnic groups on the plantations. Many residents lead a subsistence lifestyle, at least in part, and they fish and hunt not for recreation but for food.

CULTURE

A great way to experience Molokai's culture is by attending one of the community events held throughout the year. The largest is **Molokai Ka Hula Piko** (☎ 808/553-3876; www.molokaievents.com), a weekend festival held the third weekend in May to celebrate the island's distinction as the birthplace of hula. Some 2,000 people usually attend the 2-day event, held at Papohaku Beach in Kaluakoi, to enjoy Hawaiian music, hula performances, local crafts, and homemade local food.

LANDSCAPE

Molokai is known for its rugged beauty, especially the four unspoiled valleys on its north coast. Only Halawa, reached at the end of Highway 450, is accessible by automobile. The others—Pelekunu, Wailau, and Waikolu—can be partially viewed by air or sea.

These remote and isolated valleys serve as unofficial nature and culture sanctuaries, kept private and truly pristine by virtue of their distance from civilization and minimal use. They are almost exclusively the domain of Hawaiians, who hunt and fish in the valleys when weather allows them to land their boats. A few folks live year-round in these hideaways, growing taro in the fertile, well-watered soil and making occasional trips into town to replenish their supplies.

You can get a sense of the lush beauty found in these valleys at **The Nature Conservancy's 2,774-acre Kamakou Preserve,** located at an elevation of about 2,700 feet, which is nearly the highest point on the island. This rainforest is home to numerous endemic (found nowhere else) and native plants, and five species of endangered birds. It's also one of the few places in the islands where you're likely

Our Man in Molokai

If you're looking for an all-around adventure guide, Walter Naki is your man. A Native Hawaiian, born and raised on Molokai, he knows all of the island's nooks and crannies. And since he's a super athlete, certified diver, and boat captain, you can be confident he'll keep things safe. He's the sole operator of **Maa Hawaii** ★★ (P.O. Box 1269 Kaunakakai, HI 96748; ☎ 808/558-8184), which offers a boat trip to the rugged north shore for $100 per person; if the water is calm enough, he'll take you right into beautiful Wailau Valley. Custom whale-watching, deep-sea and reef-fishing, sightseeing, and scuba-diving (bring your own gear) excursions are available upon request. Landlubbers can take half-day hiking treks for $50, and he'll guide hunters to the best spots on private land to bag pigs, deer, and goats. The daylong hunts cost $300, and he provides rifles and ammo. Archers pay $200 but must supply their own equipment.

to encounter the lovely Kamehameha butterfly. Call ☎ 808/553-5236 for information about guided hikes in the preserve.

ACTIVE MOLOKAI

Molokai is best suited to those who can entertain themselves. Although it has plenty of outdoor recreation opportunities, it doesn't have an abundance of companies offering activities. But there are some outfits that will escort you into the island's more wild and remote places.

LAND-BASED ACTIVITIES

Hiking

It's difficult to do much hiking on Molokai without running into private land, so a guided trek can help. One of the best guides is Molokai native **Eddie Tanaka** ★ (☎ 808/558-4477), who can tailor an outing to meet your interests and ability. Half-day hikes run about $50 per person, with a maximum of six people. **Molokai Ranch Outfitters Center** (☎ 888/729-0059 or 808/552-2791) also conducts a number of hiking tours on its lands, including a daylong excursion ($75 per person) into beautiful Halawa Valley, with its waterfall, stream, and numerous ancient house sites and taro terraces. The tour is educational as well as scenic, with guides sharing details about Hawaiian culture and history.

The island's best hike is the 3-mile path that descends some 1,600 feet into the **Kalaupapa Peninsula.** You'll traverse 26 switchbacks on this well-maintained trail that's also used by mules. It takes at least 90 minutes to make it down, and 2 hours for the return hike—and that's at a fast pace. Allow more time to enjoy the marvelous coastal landscape that's always in view. Since the trail and peninsula are within a National Historic Park, hikers are required to reserve a place on the 4-hour settlement tour ($40) through **Damien Tours** (☎ 808/567-6171; see p. 201 for more information) before they can descend the *pali.*

Each month, **The Nature Conservancy** (☎ 808/553-5236; www.nature.org/hawaii) offers an excellent guided hike of its Kamakou Preserve, a 2,774-acre native rainforest area that is otherwise closed to the public. It features views into the verdant Pelekunu Valley and information about Hawaii's native flora and fauna. Another guided trek is also conducted monthly into the group's Moomomi Preserve, a rare coastal dune ecosystem that houses endangered plants. You'll also see turtles and seabirds. The hikes are $10 for members of TNC and $25 for nonmembers. Reservations are required.

If you're determined to get off on your own, hike the **Main Forest Road** that travels inland about 20 miles. It's a rough and rutted red dirt road that can be traversed in a four-wheel-drive vehicle, but you'll usually have it all to yourself, especially on weekends. The ground is frequently muddy (and the red clay does not wash out of clothing) beneath a forest canopy of introduced pine, eucalyptus, and native ohia trees. To reach this area, head west on Route 460 from Kaunakakai and turn right at the bridge, just before mile marker 4. You'll pass Homelani Cemetery, where Main Forest Road, also known as Maunahui Road, heads into the mountains. The first part is dry and hilly, but you'll soon be in the forest. If it's dry, drive as far as you comfortably can and park (making sure you don't obstruct the road), then start walking from there. It's also a good mountain-bike trek.

Note: If you wish to hike on your own, pick up maps from the **State Department of Land and Natural Resources** (on Olo Ave., a mile west of Kaunakakai Rd.; ☎ 808/533-1745) in Kaunakakai.

Golf

Unlike the other Hawaiian Islands, golf is not huge on Molokai, which has just two 9-hole courses that could be characterized as either charming or primitive, depending on your attitude. Both offer 7am tee times, and you can play until sunset. Better yet, the greens fees are cheap compared to the triple-digit prices charged elsewhere in the state. The cheapest is **Ironwood Hills Golf Course** (Kalae Ave., Kualapuu; ☎ 808/567-8000), where you pay just $18 for 9 holes and $25 to play through twice. This par-34 course is located in the cool hills above the Meyer Sugar Hill at an elevation of 1,200 feet. It's fairly well maintained but not heavily used. It has no food or pro-shop services, but you can rent clubs and carts. Only slightly more expensive is the **Kaluakoi Golf Course** (1131 Kaluakoi Rd., Maunaloa; ☎ 808/552-0255), where it costs $20 to play 9 holes and $35 to go through the course twice. These par-72 links on the island's west end were once an 18-hole resort-quality course, but they've since slipped into disrepair. Molokai Ranch bought the course and is slowly bringing it back to life; the front 9 are now restored and open.

Tennis

You can play for free on four public courts, all lit for night play. Two are located at Molokai High School in Hoolehua, and another two are at the Kaunakakai Community Center. The Ke Nani Kai and Wavecrest condominium projects also have two courts each, which are restricted to condo guests, who can play for free.

Horseback Riding

Those who prefer horseback riding to the mules of the Kalaupapa Peninsula can sign up for trail rides at two working island ranches. For the quality of the scenery and personalized attention, I prefer **Puu O Hoku Ranch** (25 miles from Kaunakakai on the east end; ☎ 800/558-8109; http://puuohoku.com), where you can ride through open fields that take you to waterfalls and secluded beaches. Rates are $55 for a 1-hour guided trail ride, $75 for a 2-hour ride, and $15 for each additional hour. For $120, you can take a half-day ride on a sandy beach. At the 65,000-acre **Molokai Ranch** (P.O. Box 259, Maunaloa; ☎ 808/552-2791; www.molokaifishanddive.com), you can experience your own "City Slickers" adventure, joining a cattle round-up among real cowboys ($80 for 1½–2 hr.). The ranch also offer three less strenuous trail rides, including one that visits Amikopala, an ancient adze quarry, at prices ranging from $80 to $125 for a 90-minute-to-2-hour ride.

Bicycling

Quiet and relatively traffic-free, Molokai is an ideal destination for bicycle touring. You can rent bikes from two well-respected companies. **Molokai Bicycle** (80 Mohala St., Kaunakakai; ☎ 800/709-2453 or 808/553-3931; www.bikehawaii.com/molokaibicycle) is my first choice, offering mountain bikes for $15 to $20 per day or street bikes for $20 to $24. The company also leads guided bike tours on private **Puu O Hoku Ranch** (25 miles from Kaunakakai on the east end; ☎ 808/552-2791; http://puuohoku.com) that range from $45 to $65 for a 1-to-5-hour ride, with a two-person minimum. **Molokai Ranch Outfitters Center** (259 Maunaloa;

A Horseback Ride to Iliiliopae Heiau

by Jeanette Foster

On horseback (where the elevated view is magnificent), you bump along a dirt trail through an incredible mango grove, bound for an ancient temple of human sacrifice. This temple of doom—right out of *Indiana Jones*—is **Iliiliopae,** a huge rectangle of stone made of 90 million rocks, overlooking the once-important village of Mapulehu and four ancient fishponds. The horses trek under the perfumed mangoes, then head uphill through a kiawe forest filled with Java plums to the *heiau* (temple), which stands across a dry streambed under cloud-spiked Kaunolu, the 4,970-foot island summit.

Hawaii's most powerful *heiau* attracted *kahuna* (priests) from all over the islands. They came to learn the rules of human sacrifice at this university of sacred rites. Contrary to Hollywood's version, historians say that the victims here were always men, not young virgins, and that they were strangled, not thrown into a volcano, while priests sat on lauhala mats watching silently. Spooky, eh?

This is the biggest, oldest, and most famous *heiau* on Molokai. The massive 22-foot-high stone altar is dedicated to Lono, the Hawaiian god of fertility. The *heiau* resonates with *mana* (power) strong enough to lean on. Legend says Iliiliopae was built in a single night by a thousand men who passed rocks hand over hand through the Wailau Valley from the other side of the island; in exchange for the *ili'ili* (rock), each received an *'opae* (shrimp). Others say it was built by *menehune,* mythic elves who accomplished Herculean feats.

For more information, contact **Molokai Wagon Rides,** King Kamehameha V Hwy. (Hwy. 450), at mile marker 15, Kaunakakai, HI 96748 (☎ 808/558-8380). The tour and horseback ride is $50 per person. The hour-long ride goes up to the *heiau,* then beyond it to the top of the mountain for those breathtaking views, and finally back down to the beach.

☎ 888/729-0059 or 808/552-2791; www.molokai.com/ranch) is the runner-up choice because its rates are a bit higher at $20 to $30 per day. It maintains a number of courses for beginning through advanced riders on ranchlands and offers guided bike tours that run $40 for a half day and $80 for a full-day ride.

Hunting

Molokai Ranch is a private hunting area, with 54,000 acres under its control. Through **Hawaiian Kine Hunting** (☎ 808/336-0095), you can arrange to hunt axis deer ($650 per day) or game birds ($100 per day). Those rates are per person; private guide services are an extra $300 to $400 per day for parties of one to four hunters. If that's too rich for your budget, contact the **State Department of Land and Natural Resources** (☎ 808/533-1745), which manages the public lands on Molokai, with some units set aside for year-round pig and goat hunts,

and others open seasonally for game birds. A state hunting license and hunter safety card are required. License prices vary depending on the game sought.

WATERSPORTS

Kayaking

The rough seas around Molokai make kayaking here a specialty sport, recommended only for expert kayakers who have honed their skills elsewhere. If you fall into that category, this can be a highly rewarding paddling area in which you'll see a number of spectacularly beautiful valleys. In general, kayaking is easier in the summer months when the seas are a bit calmer. Some recommended companies for tours and rentals include: **Outfitters Center** (☎ 888/729-0059 or 808/558-8396), which conducts a south-shore kayak tour that's relatively safe because it stays inside the reef. It costs $65 per person, or $45 for ranch guests. **Molokai Rentals and Tours** (☎ 808/553-5663) offers a similar and comparably priced kayak tour, while **Molokai Outdoors** (☎ 808/553-4477) has a guided coastline tour for $78 and a sunset paddle tour for $45. All three companies also rent kayaks ($25 single and $45 tandem) and mountain bikes ($20–$27) by the day.

Snorkeling & Scuba Diving

Snorkeling and scuba diving are popular in the waters around Molokai, and you can rent snorkel gear for just $9 a day at **Molokai Fish and Dive** (61 Ala Malama, Kaunakakai; ☎ 808/553-5926; www.molokaifishanddive.com). The generally calm waters at One Alii Beach Park are good for beginners, and the shoreline that runs alongside Route 450 offers some excellent conditions between mile markers 18 and 20.

If you want to dive or snorkel from a boat, your best bet is **Bill Kapuni's Snorkel and Dive Adventure** ★ (☎ 808/553-9867). He uses a Boston Whaler that can handle a maximum of six passengers, and his fees are very reasonable: $95 for a two-tank dive, including snacks, or $65 to ride along and snorkel. He'll also arrange custom fishing, sightseeing, and whale-watching tours.

Deep-Sea Fishing & Cruises

Deep-sea fishing is excellent in the Penguin Banks of Molokai, where you can hook game fish like ahi, akui, mahimahi, and marlin. You can go out on the ***Alyce C*** (at the Kaunakakai Harbor, off Kaunakakai Rd.; ☎ 808/558-8377; daily by appointment), a 31-foot fishing boat that can be chartered for $300 for a half day or $400 for a full day, with all gear included. Another option is **Fun Hogs Hawaii** (☎ 808/567-6789; www.molokaifishing.com), which offers half- and full-day tours at similar rates, as well as a 2-hour sunset cruise.

If you'd prefer to simply sail into the sunset, you can take a 2-hour sail for $40 with **Molokai Charters** (at the Kaunakakai Harbor, off Kaunakakai Rd.; ☎ 808/553-5852; daily by appointment) aboard a 42-foot sloop. The company also makes a full-day run to Lanai, with a snorkeling stop, for $90. Prices are per-person, based on a four-person minimum.

ATTENTION, SHOPPERS!

Shopping is not a favorite pastime on Molokai, both due to a shortage of stores and a tendency among residents to embrace a simple, nonmaterialistic lifestyle.

However, if you're looking for something special to bring home, you can purchase all manner of kites at **Big Wind Kite Factory** (120 Maunaloa Hwy., Maunaloa; ☎ 808/552-2364). If your flying skills are a bit rusty, the owner will even give you a free lesson in the field next door.

And if you're looking for arts and crafts made by Molokai artisans, stop by **Molokai Island Creations** (61 Ala Malama St., Kaunakakai; ☎ 808/553-5926), where you'll find a reasonable collection of glassware, clothing, jewelry, and other crafts. A wider selection can be found at **Molokai Fine Arts Gallery** (2 Kamoi St., Suite 300, Kaunakakai; ☎ 808/553-8520; www.molokaifinearts.com), which represents some 100 Molokai artists and crafters. The gallery includes a fine display of paintings, sculptures, blown glass, hand-turned wooden bowls, hula implements, and traditional crafts such as lauhala hats and mats.

Stores on Molokai tend to operate Monday through Saturday from 9am to 5pm.

NIGHTLIFE ON MOLOKAI

You won't find much happening on Molokai after the sun goes down, but you can enjoy live Hawaiian entertainment nightly, starting about 6pm, at **Hula Shores Restaurant in the Hotel Molokai** (☎ 808/533-5347) and on Friday and Saturday nights in the **Maunaloa Room of the Lodge at Molokai Ranch** (☎ 808/552-2791).

ABCs of Molokai

Area Code Like all of Hawaii, Molokai uses the 808 area code.

Business Hours Two full-service banks, each with an ATM, are open weekdays in Kaunakakai from 8:30am to 4:30pm, with extended hours until 6pm on Friday. Government offices are open weekdays from 8am to 5pm. Most stores are open daily from 9 or 10am to 5 or 6pm.

Car Rental You'll find two car-rental agencies at the Hoolehua Airport and another in Kaunakakai. See p. 190.

Currency Exchange Your best bet is to change money at the Honolulu Airport before you fly to Molokai, or use traveler's checks.

Emergencies For the police, fire, or ambulance, dial ☎ **911.**

Information The **Molokai Visitors Association** (☎ 800/ or 808/553-3876; www.molokai-hawaii.com) provides information about visitor services, including maps and brochures.

Medical **Molokai General Hospital** (☎ 808/553-5331) in Kaunakakai offers 24-hour emergency medical care. A few physicians maintain private practices in Kaunakakai.

Newspapers The island is served by two local papers, the *Dispatch* and *Molokai Advertiser-News* (www.molokaiadvertiser-news.com), as well as the *Maui News,* the *Honolulu Advertiser,* and the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin.*

Pharmacies You can have prescriptions filled at **Molokai Drugs** (located in the Kamoi Professional Center; ☎ 808/553-5790) in Kaunakakai.

Police In an emergency, call ☎ **911;** otherwise, dial ☎ 808/553-5355.

Post Office The main post office, at 120 Ala Malama St. in Kaunakakai, is open weekdays and Saturday mornings.

Safety Molokai is nearly devoid of violent crime, but don't leave valuables in your rental car.

5 Lanai: From Tropical Fruit to Tourism

Once the world's major pineapple supplier, Lanai now profits from golf courses and resorts.

by Joan Conrow

LANAI—AN ARID, PEAR-SHAPED ISLAND VISIBLE FROM THE SOUTHERN COAST of Maui—is the plain Jane of Hawaii when compared to its big, beautiful neighbors. As the sixth-largest Hawaiian Island, its natural features are far less grand, both in size and splendor, than elsewhere in the state. And since it has only recently emerged from a plantation lifestyle and economy, it has far fewer amenities and attractions than other Hawaii tourist destinations.

Still, it does have its charms, including scenic treasures that make it distinct, lots of wide-open spaces, and plenty of peace and quiet. Many consider Lanai's slow pace its best feature, and it's ideal if you're seeking a quiet retreat or if you've already traveled in Hawaii and appreciate its diversity. You might also consider Lanai for a day trip or overnight stay as part of a longer sojourn in the islands. But it's probably not the best choice if you're making your first trip to this area of the world, or taking a once-in-a-lifetime vacation, because its dry landscape doesn't fit the tropical ideal.

Lanai has always been something of an anomaly in Hawaii. For starters, it's one of just two privately owned islands; the other is Niihau, which lies off Kauai's southwest coast. But whereas Kauai's Robinson family owns Niihau in its entirety, Castle & Cooke (a Hawaiian conglomerate) holds nearly all the land on Lanai, save for a few parcels owned by individuals. Politically, it's part of Maui County, along with Kahoolawe and Molokai, the other two small islands that lie in the lee of the Valley Isle. But despite its close ties to the vacation hot spot of Maui, Lanai is a late bloomer in the state's visitor industry, having missed tourism's initial growth spurt by virtue of its former role as "the pineapple island."

DON'T LEAVE LANAI WITHOUT . . .

Eating a fresh, island-grown pineapple. As you enjoy the sweet fruit, consider Lanai's history. This small island was once the world's major supplier of pineapples. See p. 211.

Adorning yourself in a distinctive lei. Your lei will often be made with the unusual vinelike Kaunaoa, which is Lanai's official flower. See p. 214.

Swimming or snorkeling at Hulopoe Beach. The snorkeling is especially delightful, due to both the excellent visibility and the bay's status as a Marine Life Conservation District, which limits fishing. See p. 219.

Strolling the grounds of the Lodge at Koele. The woodsy, upcountry setting (it sits at 1,600 ft. elevation) is a welcome departure from the oceanfront locale now standard among posh island hotels. See p. 217.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Lanai has supported agriculture since ancient times; and for many years its small population fished and grew enough taro and sweet potato to meet its needs. But with the arrival of Western missionaries, who bought up most of the island by 1865, Lanai was pressed into more productive service. Its new owners attempted to raise sugar, then cattle. These agricultural ventures deforested much of the arid landscape, causing erosion and the loss of vegetation and natural springs, which worsened the island's periodic droughts.

New Zealand naturalist George Munro, who came to Lanai in 1911 to run the plantation, began working to reverse this trend by controlling feral goats, protecting the small remaining native forest, and planting trees throughout the uplands. His mark on the landscape is still evident, particularly in the Norfolk pines that give the higher-elevation areas a woodsy charm. But Munro proved more adept at reforestation than reviving the ailing plantation, which was forced to sell its extensive holdings. The land was bought and sold several times over the next few years until James Dole purchased it for $1.1 million in 1922.

Like so many other descendants of missionaries, Dole hoped to wrest his fortune from Hawaii's fertile soil. Certain he could succeed where others had failed, Dole launched a massive pineapple cultivation and processing venture that dominated the island's landscape, economy, and social fabric for the next 70 years. He built Lanai City, the tiny burg that still functions as the island's hub, and brought in Filipinos to tend his fields and work in the cannery. Under his direction, Lanai became a self-contained company town where nearly every resident worked for the plantation, shopped in its stores, and lived in its housing. Pineapple thrived in the hot, dry conditions, and Dole—whose name is still synonymous with the sweet, prickly-topped fruit—realized his dream of fame and fortune. At its peak in the 1970s, some 18,000 acres were under cultivation, making Lanai the world's largest pineapple plantation.

PINEAPPLES GIVE WAY TO TOURISM

The dream began to fade as pineapple profits plunged in the 1980s, when Thailand and other Asian nations entered the market with high-quality, low-cost fruit. By then, Dole had been gobbled up by Castle & Cooke, a major Hawaii conglomerate facing its own economic challenges. It soon became clear that island pineapple could not compete with the lower-priced imports, and the company began scaling back its Lanai operations. In preparation for shutting down the plantation entirely, fields were harvested and left fallow, and the workforce was steadily reduced.

When entrepreneur David Murdoch purchased Castle & Cooke, unemployed island residents perked up, imagining him as the wealthy Western knight who could afford to keep the plantation running. But Murdoch had his own plans for the island, and they didn't include large-scale farming. Tourism was booming throughout the state, and it was evident that no crop—aside from marijuana—could generate anything close to the revenues possible from land development.

Continuing his predecessor's patriarchal approach to running the island, Murdoch announced that current residents were welcome to stay—so long as they embraced his vision for a new Lanai based not on farm commodities but on a service economy. Although he reportedly liked having his own private island, Murdoch had no plans to make it off-limits. He saw no value in following the Robinson family's example, which prohibits all access to Niihau and largely eschews tourism. Instead, Murdoch laid out the welcome mat and began aggressively marketing the island, whose single, 10-room hotel had hosted relatively few visitors during pineapple's heyday.

Murdoch invested heavily in his development plans, spending more than $350 million to build two luxury hotels, golf courses, and upscale housing in hopes of attracting wealthy visitors who desire the exclusivity and social control that the newly renamed "Private Isle" can provide. When Bill and Melinda Gates were honeymooning on Lanai, Murdoch closed public access to the island's only sandy beach at Manele Bay and hired security forces to keep away paparazzi in a much-publicized demonstration of his willingness to accommodate the special needs of the megarich.

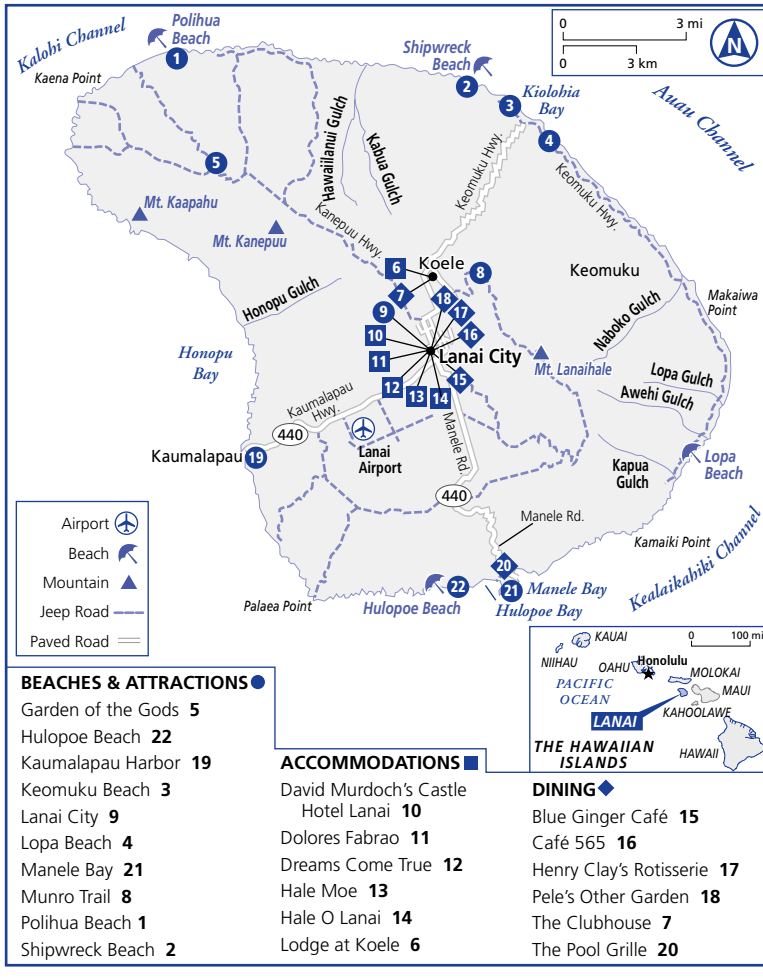
While Murdoch's foray into tourism filled the economic void left by pineapples, islanders haven't made a seamless shift from the fields to the front desk. Many folks remain deeply ambivalent about the visitor industry, even though it provides them with the jobs they need to stay on the island, and that attitude is palpable all around Lanai.

Residents are invariably polite and friendly enough, but studies have been conducted to determine the social impact of Lanai's abrupt shift into tourism, and they aren't encouraging. They point to an increase in crime, drug and alcohol use, and migration off the island, especially among young people. Since the 1990 opening of the first resort, the insular, agrarian qualities that once defined Lanai have almost completely disappeared, along with the unique lifestyle they engendered. As residents struggle to adapt, the once tight-knit community here is also unraveling. No longer united around the plantation, residents have been further divided by conflicts over how fully they should embrace tourism and the new values introduced by Lanai's predominantly affluent visitors.

LAY OF THE LAND

Lanai is the sixth-largest Hawaiian Island, encompassing some 140 square miles. It's about 13 miles wide and 18 miles long. **Lanaihale** is the highest peak, rising 3,370 feet above sea level. Dramatic sea cliffs tower 1,500 to 2,000 feet above the Pacific on the island's west side, while the east side is marked by numerous narrow gorges that reach depths of up to 2,000 feet.

The landscape has been gravely affected by the grandiose economic schemes implemented over the past 150 years. Ranch animals destroyed nearly all of



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Lanai's native vegetation, except for a small pocket of rare dry forest called the **Kanepuu Preserve,** which is being restored. Vegetation is sparse, and nearly all the plants you see are introduced species. The erosion caused by the deforestation is evident everywhere, particularly in the starkly rugged uplands, where water has gouged deep channels in the red-clay soil.

Decades of intensive pineapple cultivation also took a toll, with Hawaii growers relying heavily on chemical fertilizers, fungicides, and pesticides, including DDT, to produce the high yields sought by agribusiness. Vast areas once cultivated in pineapple lie fallow, totally barren save for the ubiquitous black plastic once used as mulch and now in various stages of disintegration.

Flower Power

Lanai's flower is the **kaunaoa**, a yellow and orange air plant. Lei makers take the thin, light orange strands of this vine and twist them together.

On the other hand, **Manele Bay** and **Koele** feel like a different world—which is exactly what the developers intended for these two resorts. The attention lavished upon them is evident in the extensive landscaped grounds around both hotels, and the manicured golf links that stand in lush contrast to the otherwise dry coastline at Manele Bay, where even the public beach park is kept neat and tidy for the benefit of hotel guests.

This is the island to visit if you're looking for a quiet retreat; there are few spots in the world quite as serene and removed. But overall, I think it's difficult for Lanai to compete with her larger, lusher, more interesting neighbors.

GETTING TO & AROUND LANAI

Lanai lies 8 miles south of Maui, and it's accessible by air and sea.

GETTING THERE

Aloha Island Air (☎ 800/652-65641; www.alohaairlines.com) and **Hawaiian Airlines** (☎ 800/882-8811; www.hawaiianair.com) offer five to seven daily flights, which are most conveniently scheduled when your departure point is Honolulu, Oahu, or Kahului, Maui. Occasional flights also fly between the Big Island and Lanai. Given the relatively low volume of traffic, the airlines use their smallest craft, tiny twin-engine planes. These planes are more compatible with the tiny landing strip but they can be especially difficult for those with a fear of flying.

Pacific Wings (☎ 888/575-4546; www.pacificwings.com), a small, Maui-based aircraft operator, makes two flights daily between Kahului and Lanai and another two that link Lanai with Honolulu. It's also common to see private planes parked at the airport, awaiting the VIPs who flock here for the island's privacy.

The miniscule airport is comfortable enough, but only offers minimal services, including restrooms, a small gift shop, and public telephones. Set in the midst of open grasslands, the airport feels like it's off in the middle of nowhere, although Lanai City is just 4 miles away.

You can also catch an **Expeditions Ferry** (☎ 808/661-3756; www.go-lanai.com), which makes five round-trips daily between Lahaina, Maui, and Manele Bay. Reservations are recommended. The ocean crossing takes about 45 minutes and can be rough, especially later in the day when the wind picks up. Still, it's visually stunning to see Maui and the other islands from the water. At $25 for adults and $20 for children ages 2 to 11, this is the cheapest way to visit Lanai and an especially convenient mode of travel if you want to see the island in a day trip.

GETTING AROUND

Lanai is probably the only island aside from Oahu where you can avoid renting a car. If you're staying at any of the island's three hotels, you can catch one of their

shuttles, which service the airport and make frequent runs between the resorts, stopping at Lanai City along the way. You'll pay $10 for the airport run; otherwise, the service is free.

Rabaca's Limousine Service (☎ 808/565-6670) offers island tours 24 hours a day in either a stretch limo or four-wheel-drive vehicle—rates are $50 to $75 an hour, with a 2-hour minimum. Rabaca's also sends a limo to meet every plane and ferry; it'll cost you $5 to $10 for a ride to one of the resorts or Lanai City.

If you'd rather be independent, you can rent a vehicle at **Lanai City Service Inc.** (1036 Lanai Ave.; ☎ 808/565-7227), the scruffy gas station that doubles as a Dollar Rent-a-Car outlet. It's wise to reserve a car in advance as the rental fleet is small. A complimentary shuttle service meets customers at the airport and ferry terminal and transports them to the rental office in Lanai City. Expect to pay nearly double the rates charged on the main islands; bargains are virtually nonexistent. Passenger cars run $60 to $80 per day; four-wheel-drive Jeep Wranglers cost about $130.

Since passenger cars are restricted to paved roads, you'll need a Jeep to explore the backcountry. Be sure to inquire about any areas where travel is prohibited by the rental contract. Before venturing off-road, be forewarned that it's not always easy to find your way through the maze of unmarked dirt roads that crisscross the island. Even light rains can make the clay roads slippery and dangerous, so exercise extreme caution while driving and don't push your luck if the weather is sketchy.

ACCOMMODATIONS, BOTH STANDARD & NOT

Your selection on Lanai is extremely limited, first by personal finances and then by the availability of rooms. The good news is that this fact makes your decision pool narrower and the final choice easier. The bad news is: You must book accommodations far in advance, especially if you're bargain hunting. The island has just three hotels and a smattering of bed-and-breakfast establishments and vacation-rental homes. All lodging is conveniently located in Lanai City except for the two luxury resorts, which are set at Manele Bay and in the cool uplands of Koele.

If you're traveling with a family or planning an extended stay, you'll save money and gain comfort by renting a vacation house. Although rates vary with the grandeur of the home, you can rent a perfectly fine house that sleeps five to seven for under $200 per night, with rates increasing to $500 to $750 per night for a luxury home that comfortably accommodates 10. They typically require a 2-night minimum stay and extend price breaks for weekly and monthly rental terms. The homes are furnished with everything you need except food, making for a carefree stay. Couples won't fare quite as well, as timeshare condominiums are pretty much the only small units available, and they run about $180 to $200 a night.

Only two Lanai real-estate firms offer vacation-rental services, but given their small inventory, they know the properties well and keep an eye on them. Since this isn't a hard-sell kind of place (demand tends to be higher than supply), you can expect the realtors to be frank about the listings. I suggest you start with **Okamoto Realty** (☎ 808/565-7519), as it's the only agency handling timeshare properties at Manele Bay and Koele, and it always has more listings than **Lanai Realty** (☎ 808/565-6597).

Campers have just one choice on Lanai: **Hulopoe Beach Park,** on the south side of the island. You can pitch your tent on one of six grassy sites near the ocean and enjoy solar-heated showers and modern restroom facilities. Reservations are required, along with a camping permit that costs $5, plus an extra five bucks for each camper. Contact the **Lanai Company** (PO Box 630310, Lanai City, HI 96763; ☎ 808/565-3982).

$ If you're looking for rock-bottom prices and full-on local flavor, contact **Dolores Fabrao** (538 Akahi St.; ☎ 808/565-6134). She rents rooms in her house for $50 to $60 per night, the lowest rate you'll find on the island. The rooms are basic and plainly furnished, but comfortable enough, as well as clean and typically quiet. Except—and this is a big exception—if a hunting party is staying in her big room, where a group can bed down for $25 bucks a head (in a room that holds six to eight people). You'll be treated like family, right down to waiting your turn to use one of the two shared bathrooms.

$ Hale Moe ✯ (502 Akolu St.; ☎ 808/565-9520; www.staylanai.com) is also a private home where you can rent a bedroom with a private bathroom, or the entire three-bedroom house. This, too, is simple, no-frills lodging, but it's clean, modern, and comfortable. It's also a pretty good deal, with nightly rates ranging from $80 to $90, including a self-serve breakfast buffet. There's no minimum stay either. The whole house rents for $300 per night and sleeps eight.

$ At **Dreams Come True** (12th St. and Lanai Ave.; ☎ 800/566-6961 or 808/565-6961; www.dreamscometruelanai.com), you can rent one of four rooms, each with its own bathroom, in this comfortable bed-and-breakfast inn. The six-bedroom plantation-style house was built in 1925 and completely renovated in 2000 to accept guests. The owners, who make jewelry in an on-site workshop, live in the house. Guests share a large living room and have use of laundry facilities and a modern kitchen. Set on a large lot, amid flowers and fruit trees, guests can watch the sunset from the veranda in back. The common areas are attractively decorated with Indonesian antiques. Rooms are neat and adequate. The beds are new and quite comfortable. One room has a stall shower but no tub, while the bathroom for another room is across the hall. You can also choose from a variety of room sizes, with some units suitable for four. The entire operation feels fresh and welcoming and offers a number of nice touches, including a whirlpool tub in each bathroom and fresh tropical juices served with the continental breakfast. Rooms are $99 per night, or $380 for the whole house.

$$ You can rent **Hale O Lanai** (Fourth St. and Lanai Ave.; ☎ 808/247-3637; www.hibeach.com), a classic two-bedroom, two-bathroom plantation-style house, for $115 to $135 per night, making it a reasonable choice for family lodging. A 2-night minimum stay is required. It's small and simple, but homey; bedrooms, it must be said, are a tight fit, with twin beds in one and a queen in the other. The modern kitchen is fully equipped, and you'll find the usual amenities including a telephone and a television.

$$ Lanai's first hotel, which now goes by the lengthy name of **David Murdoch's Castle Hotel Lanai** ✯✯ (828 Lanai Ave.; ☎ 800/795-7211 or 808/565-7211;

www.hotellanai.com), is the island's most charming place to stay, a distinction due in equal parts to the classic plantation-style architecture and friendly atmosphere of this 10-room inn. It's about 10 miles from a beach. Set back from the road, and surrounded by an expansive lawn and Norfolk pines, the hotel manages to be both stately and welcoming. Built in 1923, it was the only place to stay on Lanai until the Lodge at Koele (see below) opened in 1990. Although it has retained such traditional features as a corrugated iron roof and board-and-batten construction, the inn was remodeled several times over the years, most recently to refurbish the private en-suite bathrooms. The four rooms that open onto the expansive, enclosed veranda fronting the hotel are especially desirable. In keeping with the inn's rustic setting and plantation roots, the rooms are small, simple, and neat as a pin. They're comfortable in a country-living way, replete with pine furniture, colorful throw rugs on the hardwood floors, and patchwork quilts for the beds. A complimentary continental breakfast is served each morning in the dining room, which is paneled in knotty pine and decorated with mounted hunting trophies. Overall, this hotel has an informal, easy ambience. While Hotel Lanai isn't super cheap, it's possible to pay $115 to $135 for these pleasant accommodations. Check the website for online savings.

$$$$ This place is probably outside the realm of possibility for most frugal travelers. But, just in case you're saving everywhere else in order to splurge on a couple nights at a fantastic romantic hideaway, with a truly distinctive hotel experience in Hawaii, consider the **Lodge at Koele** ★★★ kids (Keomuku Hwy., Lanai City; ☎ 800/321-4666 or 808/565-7300; www.islandoflanai.com). Yes, it's superexpensive and ultradeluxe, with guest rooms running $400 to $500 per night. But while so many pricey Hawaii hotels tend toward a dreary sameness despite their opulence, the Lodge is special. This Four Seasons hotel has the design and decor of a grand manor house in the best European tradition, with the expansive grounds and varied gardens one would expect of a true country retreat. The woodsy, upcountry setting (it sits at 1,600 ft. elevation) is a welcome departure from the oceanfront locale now standard among posh island hotels. The resort has a peaceful, genteel ambience enhanced by such amenities as sunny reading nooks, music and game rooms, afternoon tea, croquet, lawn bowling, badminton, archery, formal gardens, and wonderful meals. The cool nights lend themselves to comforts not typically enjoyed in Hawaii, such as two massive fireplaces in the Great Hall and thick, downy quilts conducive to snuggling in the plumpest beds I've ever encountered. Koele Lodge is one hotel where you can be perfectly content without ever leaving the grounds. Even the kids will be well entertained if you check them in to the *keiki* camp, which offers nature treks, fishing with bamboo poles, art projects, movies, games, and other activities. The camp is run daily, plus 2 nights each week. A major guest-room refurbishment is planned, which will reduce room availability through 2006. Call for details.

DINING FOR ALL TASTES

Although Lanai has a minimal selection of restaurants and cuisines, it does a good job of feeding folks. Meals range from simple to top-notch gourmet, priced accordingly. Most options fall into the budget or superexpensive categories, with

little in between. Aside from the dining rooms at the two resorts, all of your choices are in Lanai City.

$–$$ Casual dining and basic, light meals are featured at **Café 565** (408 Eighth St.; ☎ 808/565-6622), which takes its name from the Lanai telephone prefix. You'll find a mix of local fare, presented as plate lunches and noodle dishes, along with calzones, thin-crust pizzas, soups, salads, and sandwiches, all reasonably priced at $5 to $12.

$–$$$ Consistently good, the **Blue Ginger Café** ★ (409 Seventh Ave.; ☎ 808/565-6363) occupies a restored plantation-style house and serves food that is as down to earth and simple as its surroundings. You'll find standard breakfast fare (most items are under $5) and house-baked pastries on the menu—I found the house-baked pastries and waffles with macadamia nuts to be especially noteworthy—along with the usual sandwiches, burgers, salads, soups, and plate lunches at prices ranging from $3 to $6.50. At night, the chef branches out into meat-heavy local cuisine, including *kalbi* (Korean-style) ribs, steak, and mixed grill plates, priced from $8 to $16. If it's a nice day, the front veranda is an especially pleasant place to dine.

$–$$$ Pele's Other Garden (Eighth and Houston sts.; ☎ 808/565-9628) is another solid choice for reasonably priced meals. It features something akin to New York deli-style food during the day, with huge sandwiches, hearty salads, wraps, and light entrees priced at $4.50 to $8. You can order most of these same items at night, along with pasta and other Italian entrees for $13 to $19. They make a good pizza, too, in sizes small enough for one and big enough for one whole hungry family.

$$ Unless you have a very fat wallet, you won't be eating in the formal dining rooms at either of the resorts, where the food is excellent, but entrees are priced between $40 and $50. In a pinch, you can pick up lunch or an early dinner at **The Pool Grille** (Manele Bay Hotel; ☎ 808/565-7700), which serves hearty salads, burgers, grilled meats and fish, *saimen* (Asian noodle soup), and sandwiches ($12–$15) poolside. It's open from 11am to 5pm daily. Even better, and slightly less expensive, food is served at **The Clubhouse** (The Experience at Koele golf course; ☎ 808/565-4653), where you'll find sandwiches, salads, soups, pasta dishes, and specials for just $7 to $13, served indoors or out, overlooking the 18th green. Open daily from 10:30am to 3:30pm.

$$–$$$$ I wouldn't have expected to find good Cajun-style food on Lanai, but that's exactly what they serve at **Henry Clay's Rotisserie** at the Hotel Lanai (828 Lanai Ave.; ☎ 808-565-7211). This local favorite is definitely worth a visit if you're not pinching pennies too tightly. Choose from eggplant Creole, excellent barbecued ribs, free-range roasted venison, gourmet pizzas, and other entrees and specials priced from $18 to $26. I especially liked the lobster-and-seafood gumbo, made with fresh island fish. The portions are substantial, the ambience is hale and hearty, the service is friendly and competent, and the food is tasty. Dinner only.

WHY YOU'RE HERE: LANAI'S BEACHES

Lanai doesn't have a lot of beaches and, because of strong winds and brisk ocean currents, most of them are better suited to walking and fishing than sunbathing and swimming. That being said, if you're seeking peace and quiet, you'll have plenty of opportunity to find it on the beaches of Lanai, especially if you have access to the sort of four-wheel-drive vehicle that can reach some of the more remote spots. Be aware that you'll also encounter some of the state's wildest beaches here, which means no houses, no facilities, and generally few people.

At the top of the list is **Hulopoe Beach** ★★★, which lies at the end of Highway 440 (Manele Rd.), about 7 miles south of Lanai City. Actually, this is one of the best beaches in the entire state and possibly the United States (it was so ranked in 1997 by Dr. Stephen Leatherman, aka Doctor Beach). The fine white sand and palm trees are picture-perfect, and the water is invariably clean, clear, and temperate at about 70°F (21°C). It's usually calm enough for swimming, and the snorkeling is delightful, due to both the excellent visibility and the bay's status as a Marine Life Conservation District, which limits fishing. It has a grassy day-use area and small campground with lawns, grills, and showers.

The adjacent **Manele Bay,** an ancient fishing village, is also within the Conservation District and another top choice for snorkeling and diving. Because it serves as an anchorage for tour boats, ferries, and private yachts, this beach is busier than Hulopoe—and its shoreline is rockier—but it's still plenty scenic, especially with a dearth of easily accessible beaches. Spinner dolphins are frequent visitors at both Manele and Hulopoe, where they come close to shore to rest, nurse their young, and escape sharks.

If you're looking for sand and surf that's off the beaten track, **Shipwreck Beach** ★ fits the bill. You'll find numerous crescents of soft white sand, punctuated by points of black beach rock and bordered by low sand dunes. It takes some bumpy driving to reach this remote north-shore beach, but that keeps the crowds away. If you've got the time, follow Highway 430 (Keomuku Rd.) north from Lanai City for about 6½ miles until it dead-ends, then head west on a very rough road that hugs the shoreline for about a mile before ending at the beach. This 8-mile stretch of coast comprises four separate beaches, each a narrow strip of sand backed by low dunes. Walking and beachcombing are perfect activities to do here, but the waters are usually too rough for safe swimming and snorkeling. You can still see the remains of two wrecks offshore. No facilities.

If you don't mind bumpy roads, continue on past Shipwreck Beach for another 4 miles, still following the shoreline, until you reach **Keomuku Beach** ★. Once an ancient fishing village, it became the focal point of the failed Maunalei plantation that brought sugar to the island in 1899. You can check out the ruined remains of a few homes, as well as the island's oldest church, built in 1903 and now abandoned. This shoreline is good for fishing and beachcombing, but its exposure to trade winds tends to make the water too choppy for pleasant swimming. The snorkeling is pretty good, though. No facilities.

Brisk trade winds can also detract from the otherwise idyllic **Polihua Beach,** which boasts 1½ miles of white sand—the longest and widest stretch on the island. It's a gorgeous strand, but when the prevailing winds are blowing hard, you

can expect conditions akin to sandblasting. ***Warning:*** Strong currents make swimming here dangerous. If you happen to catch this beach on a calm day, you'll be inclined to linger and enjoy the fine views of Molokai and Oahu; in the winter months, this is a prime spot for whale-watching. You'll need a four-wheel-drive vehicle to reach this beach, which lies at the end of Polihua Road, accessed from Fraser Street out of Lanai City. No facilities.

Four-wheel-drive also is required to traverse any of several rugged dirt roads that branch off Keomuku Road and lead to **Lopa Beach,** a long stretch of white sand fronting coastal waters that are rocky but shallow enough for kids to safely swim in. It's also popular with pole and throw-net fishermen. No facilities.

THE TOP SIGHTS & ATTRACTIONS

One of Lanai's most striking scenic attractions is the **Garden of the Gods,** where boulders of all shapes and sizes are jumbled together in a dramatically eroded canyon. Ancient Hawaiians considered this area sacred, hence the name. It's especially beautiful early and late in the day, when the orange-clay soil and multihued rocks reflect the glow and colors of the rising and setting sun, making them even more vibrant. You'll want to have your camera handy, as the expansive ocean view is nothing to sniff at either. From Lanai City, take Fraser Street northwest to Polihua Road, which is unpaved. Follow it in a northwesterly direction for 6 miles to the site.

The **Munro Trail** is another famous Lanai landmark. This 8-mile track winds through stands of Norfolk pine and patches of rainforest to the top of Lanaihale Ridge, the island's high point, at 3,370 feet. From this vista, you can look down into lush interior gulches and out across the sea, where every Hawaiian island but Kauai is visible on a clear day. You can hike or use a four-wheel-drive vehicle on this rutted, bumpy road, which starts about a mile beyond the Lodge at Koele. Look for the sign along Keomuku Road. ***Warning:*** Do not attempt the trail after heavy rains; it becomes a dangerous patch of jeep-trapping mud (and with just one tow truck on the island, you could pay dearly if you get trapped up here).

It's also fun to spend a bit of time poking around **Lanai City,** which sits 1,645 feet above sea level. Norfolk pines give this orderly little village a rustic air, and I like the summer-camp appearance of the simple, boxy houses. Most have corrugated iron roofs, and some have been painted in eye-catching colors that lend some pizzazz to the sedate surroundings. Dole Park is smack in the middle of town, within walking distance of every home. Frequented by old-timers talking story, kids playing ball, and mothers with babies, this area is the community's social hub. Here's where you can witness the island's super-small-town ambience. A farmers market is held in the park on Saturday mornings, and movies are screened under the stars at 7pm on the first Wednesday of the month.

If you have the time to spare, cruise over to **Kaumalapau Harbor.** It was once a bustling place, shipping some one million pineapples daily when the plantation was in its prime. Now the island's commercial harbor is fairly quiet, except on Thursday when the barge arrives to deliver supplies. The surrounding coastline is quite scenic, offering a peak at the dramatic sheer sea cliffs on the west side. It lies a few miles outside of Lanai City on Highway 440, which takes you past a sight that's not so pretty: the dump.

THE OTHER LANAI

Although rural Lanai isn't widely known as a focal point for the arts, it's striving to develop its cultural reputation through a **Visiting Artists Program** (☎ 808/565-7300; www.lanai-resorts.com) that brings distinguished artists to the comfortable living room of the Lodge at Koele. Throughout the year, sessions are sponsored with visiting writers, sopranos, painters, musicians, actors, chefs, and others who share their talents in informal sessions offered free to anyone on Lanai.

You can also try your hand at various artistic mediums, or watch an artist at work, through the **Lanai Art Program** (339 Seventh St.; ☎ 808/565-7503), which offers free and low-cost classes by resident and visiting artists, including silk screening, raku pottery, and *gyotaku,* the art of using fresh fish to create unique prints on fabric and cloth, as well as knitting, calligraphy, and wreath making. Locally made arts and crafts are also sold here, although operating hours are intermittent because the center is staffed by volunteers. Call ahead.

ACTIVE LANAI

GOLF & TENNIS

For such a small island, Lanai has ample links, with three courses to choose from. The cheapest is **Cavendish Golf Course,** which lies at the end of Nani Street on the outskirts of Lanai City. (Actually, it's free, but donations are requested of nonresidents.) You can play this 9-hole, par-36 course twice to get in 18 holes, and walking through the tall Norfolk pines planted around the course is quite pleasant.

The island's two resorts boast top-notch courses that are distinguished by their challenging play and awesome vistas. You'll be treated to stunning views of Molokai and Maui from **The Experience at Koele** (☎ 808/565-4653), an uplands course designed by Greg Norman. With four sets of tees ranging from forward to tournament, it suits golfers at all levels of ability. If you can only play one course while on Lanai, this one should be it. Courses on the beach are a dime a dozen in Hawaii, but upland links are rare. The Experience is further distinguished by its forest setting and rustic natural beauty, not to mention its signature, 390-yard, par-4 8th hole that has garnered international attention—it drops 250 feet to a tiny green in a heavily wooded gorge.

The runner-up course, **The Challenge at Manele** (☎ 808/565-2222), follows the coastline near Manele Bay. Designed by Jack Nicklaus, this par-72 course is known for its demanding water hazards: 3 holes require tee shots over the ocean. If you're staying at the adjoining hotels, you can golf either course for $165, which includes cart rental, while nonguests pay a whopping $205 plus an additional club rental fee of $50.

Savings are tough to come by, but if you hustle, you can play both courses in one day and pay just $70 for the second round. And if you come after noon, you can play 9 holes for about half the regular prices at either course.

The two resorts also offer tennis; **Manele Bay** (☎ 808/565-7777) has six unlighted Plexipave courts and **Koele** (☎ 808/565-7300) has three, all of them lit for night play. Court use is complimentary for hotel guests; nonguests pay $25 per hour. Free play is available from 7am to 8:30pm daily on two tennis courts at Lanai School.

WATERSPORTS

Fishing is as popular as hunting on Lanai. **Spinning Dolphin Charters** (☎ 808/565-6613) runs half- and full-day charters out of Manele Bay Harbor that cost $400 and $800, respectively, with the fee spread between the one to six passengers who sign up. Ahi and aku, two types of tuna, are the most prized catches year-round. You can also take a 3-hour whale-watching tour for $300, or arrange private sightseeing and snorkel charters.

Trilogy Ocean Sports (☎ 888/628-4800 or 808/565-2387; www.sailtrilogy.com/adventures/lanai) operates in Manele Bay (the island's best snorkeling spot) as well, offering snorkeling, diving, sightseeing, and sailing expeditions on its two catamarans and rigid-bottom inflatable raft. You'll pay $179 for a snorkel/sail and van tour of the island, $45 for a raft trip, and $65 to $75 for a shore dive at Hulopoe Beach, including equipment. Kids are usually half price, and you can save 10% by booking online.

Although kayaking isn't Lanai's strong suit, you can also take a kayak/snorkeling tour, surfing lesson, or shore dive with **Adventure Lanai Ecocentre** (☎ 808/565-7373; www.adventurelanai.com). In addition, the company offers four-wheel-drive or ATV sightseeing excursions around the island, which last about 4 hours and cost $79 to $99 per person. You can also arrange custom treks and tours, or rent kayaks, camping gear, and mountain bikes through this outfit.

BIKING, HIKING & HORSEBACK RIDING

Mountain bikes also are available to rent at Hotel Lanai ($25 per day), and guests of Koele Lodge and Manele Bay Hotel can rent road or mountain bikes through their concierge desks. Lanai has miles of dirt roads with relatively little traffic, making it suitable for cyclists seeking rides that range from easy to strenuous. The Munro Trail is the most scenic and challenging of all the bike trails.

You can comfortably walk or jog on any of the island's roads, but if you want to take a true hike, your best bet is the **Koloiki Ridge Trail,** a 5-mile trek that starts behind Koele Lodge and continues through Hulopoe Valley to the Munro Ridge, culminating in expansive views from Koloiki Lookout. A moderately difficult hike that takes about 3 to 4 hours to complete, it's best suited to adults and older children.

If you'd prefer to hike *makai* (toward the ocean), rather than *mauka* (toward the mountains), you can traverse the 1½-mile **Fisherman's Trail,** part of an ancient shoreline path that once circled the entire island. It's a mostly level, easy walk that runs from Hulopoe Bay to the Manele Bay Hotel golf course, making it suitable for kids of all ages and out-of-shape adults.

Equestrians can sign up for horseback rides at **The Stables at Koele** (☎ 808/565-4424), which serves resort guests as well as the public. It offers something for everyone, from a 10-minute *keiki* pony ride to 3- and 4-hour trail rides that meander along wooded trails and through rugged plantation lands. You'll pay rates ranging from $50 for a 1-hour ride to $140 for a 4-hour excursion that includes lunch. A full-day ride into the mountains, with delightful views and gorgeous scenery, as well as a gourmet picnic, costs $400. You can also schedule a private trail ride, or take a horse-drawn carriage through Lanai City for $75 per person.

HUNTING & ARCHERY

For those who are into hunting, Lanai offers opportunities to find axis deer, mouflon sheep, mountain pig, pheasant, and other game birds. For license forms and brochures outlining hunting rules and seasons, contact the state **Department of Natural Resources** (☎ 808/565-7916). The Lanai Company has set aside about two-thirds of the island as a reserve, which it manages for private hunting. Guides are highly recommended everywhere, and are required if you want to hunt on private lands.

At **Lanai Pine Archery** (on Keamoku Hwy., about a mile north of the Lodge at Koele; ☎ 808/565-3800), you can hone your bow-and-arrow skills on 12 targets set at varying distances from the firing line. Instructions, equipment, and use of facilities will cost you $45; if you bring your own gear, it costs $25 to use the course.

ATTENTION, SHOPPERS!

Shopping is extremely limited on Lanai, but in Lanai City you can pick up some items by local artisans and others at **Gifts with Aloha** (Seventh and Houston aves.; ☎ 808/565-6589; Mon–Sat 9:30am–6pm), including ceramicware, wood crafts, handmade beads and jewelry, glass creations, Hawaiian quilts, and more, all at reasonable prices.

For an eclectic assortment of goods, visit **Akamai Trading** (408 Eighth St.; ☎ 808/565-6587; weekdays 9am–6pm, Sat 9am–5:30pm, Sun 9am–4:30pm), a general store that sells excellent local-fruit jams and jellies, along with basic necessities and gift/souvenir items.

NIGHTLIFE ON LANAI

Nightlife on Lanai is typically found in the comforts of one's own home or hotel room. The streets get quiet shortly after dark; the adage "early to bed, early to rise" is still practiced in this rural community. But if you're determined to party, you can stop by the bar at the **Hotel Lanai** (828 Lanai Ave.; ☎ 808-565-7211) for conversation and a drink in a relaxed setting, or enjoy nightly musical entertainment and a drink in the Great Hall at the **Lodge at Koele** (☎ 808/565-7300) or at **Hale Aheahe** (the lounge at the Manele Bay Hotel; ☎ 808/565-7700).

ABCs of Lanai

Area Code Like all of Hawaii, Lanai uses the 808 area code.

ATMs/Currency Exchange Your best bet is to change money at the airport in Honolulu or on Maui before you fly to Lanai, or to use traveler's checks. You can also get a cash advance from the ATMs at the two banks in Lanai City.

Business Hours Two full-service banks with ATMs are open in Lanai City from 8:30am to about 3 or 4:30pm weekdays. Government offices are open weekdays from 8am to 5pm. Most stores are open daily from 9 or 10am to 5 or 6pm.

Car Rental You'll find one car-rental agency in Lanai City: **Lanai City Service Inc.** (1036 Lanai Ave.; ☎ 808/565-7227), the scruffy gas station that doubles as a Dollar Rent-A-Car outlet.

Emergencies For the police, fire, or ambulance, dial ☎ **911.**

Information **Destination Lanai** (☎ 800/947-4774 or 808/565-7600; www.visitlanai.net) offers general information about the island. **The Lanai Company** (☎ 808/565-3000) has free maps, brochures, and other helpful materials.

Medical **Lanai Community Hospital** (☎ 808/565-6411) offers 24-hour emergency medical care. Physicians are available during regular business hours at **Lanai Family Health Center** (☎ 808/565-6423).

Newspapers The *Lanai Times* is published monthly. You can purchase copies at local stores, restaurants, and newspaper dispensers in Lanai City and at the resorts.

Pharmacies You can have prescriptions filled at **Lanai Community Hospital** (☎ 808/565-6411).

Post Office A post office is located on Jacaranda Street, adjacent to Dole Park in Lanai City. It's open 9am to 4pm weekdays and 10am to noon on Saturday.

Safety Lanai is one of the safest destinations in Hawaii, but it's still wise to watch your possessions, and don't leave valuables in your rental car.

6 Maui: Hawaii's Most Celebrated Island

With its small towns and laid-back lifestyle, this beach-lined mountain paradise surpasses Oahu in tourist numbers.

by David Thompson

AS A PERMANENT RESIDENT OF THE BIG ISLAND, I THOUGHT I WAS OVER Maui. Once, years ago, I had been a fool for the place. But I hadn't visited for so long, and so much had changed in my absence, I thought I could no longer love it.

I underestimated Maui's appeal.

Instead of estrangement, the first thing I felt upon return to Kahului Airport was the imposing presence of Haleakala volcano, rising smoothly and massively from the sea to 10,023 feet, beckoning me to its dormant summit. The older, more rugged West Maui Mountains also called, with dark misty rains and brilliant rainbows taking turns among the mountains' mysterious green folds. On a long, shimmering south-shore beach, I sank into a deep torpor as the afternoon sun tracked across the sky and foamy white caps streaked across deep blue waters far offshore. My qualms about Maui began drifting away, carried by the trade winds along with the billowing clouds floating languidly over the cane fields, carpeting the island's isthmus. Maui had me back in her warm embrace.

DON'T LEAVE MAUI WITHOUT . . .

Climbing Haleakala. Hawaiians named Haleakala "The House of the Sun," and indeed it's the place to go for a sunrise you won't forget. Even if you get up there later, the sublime views and deep sense of calm that prevails on one of the tallest peaks in the Pacific make this a place you still won't forget. See p. 291.

Exploring funky Paia. This quiet plantation town has been reinvented by hippies and windsurfers, who filled it with small shops, eclectic restaurants, and more beautiful people than any town really ought to have. See p. 232.

Watching whales. Snowbirds aren't the only ones to winter on Maui. From November through April, hundreds of humpback whales come, too. Hop on one of the dozens of whale-watching boats, or save the fare and sit at McGregor Point, a prime whale-watching site. Just about any waterfront restaurant in south or west Maui makes for good whale-watching. See p. 290.

Enjoying sushi and a song. Benefit from early-bird and late-night sushi specials, with laser karaoke, at Sansei Seafood Restaurant and Sushi Bar in Kihei and Kapalua. See p. 263.

Being a budget gourmet. Have a gourmet meal without the gourmet meal prices at Bermudez's Big Wave Café in Kihei. Make it in time for the early-bird special and get two gourmet meals for the price of one. See p. 262.

Engaging in an unforgettable splurge. One of Maui's best restaurants, Mama's Fish House, is tucked in a lovely palm grove on romantic Kuau Cove. See p. 268.

Assisting turtles. Join the researchers from the Hawaii Wildlife Fund and help the next generation of endangered hawksbill sea turtles get a healthy start on life. See p. 298.

Saying ommmmm. Drop in for a class at one of Maui's many yoga studios, calm your mind, stretch your limbs, and leave feeling better than when you arrived. See p. 300.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Over the years, Maui has changed. Maui and its closest neighbors—Molokai, Lanai, and Kahoolawe—were all once part of a giant single island, which geologists named Maui Nui, or Big Maui. As Maui Nui aged and sea levels rose, the lowlands slipped beneath the waves, leaving a rough channel between Maui and Molokai to the west, and sheltered waters between Maui, Lanai, and Kahoolawe to the south. Eventually, Maui will continue changing until it disappears altogether. Hawaiian islands have a well understood life cycle of emergence and subsidence, during which they rise up out of the sea over millions of years, then weather away until they slip back beneath the waves.

Nowadays, during winter, hundreds of whales congregate in the calm waters to mate and calve. Throughout the year, a fleet of commercial pleasure crafts takes visitors on snorkeling tours, sunset cocktail cruises, and even submarine rides. The dissolution of Maui Nui has left 120 miles of shoreline along the Maui part of what remains, with more than 80 beaches, including some of the finest in the world.

DISCOVERING MAUI

On the human scale, Maui has been changing since the first Polynesian seafarers landed 1,500 years ago and set about gently altering the landscape. They built with grass, leaf, wood, and stone, and some of their stonework remains intact today. At various sites around the island, you can see skillfully constructed walls, housing foundations, irrigation systems, and other examples of their mortarless masonry. On the road to Hana, you can stop at Piilanihale Heiau, the largest ancient Hawaiian temple in the state. Near Hana and in Makena, you can hike along segments of an ancient stone footpath—the King's Highway—that once circled the island.

Captain Cook never set foot on Maui, but the island's inhabitants certainly knew of him and the fatal falling out he had on the Big Island that ended with his death in 1779. Eight years later, when a French scientific expedition led by Jean Francois de Galaup de La Perouse appeared off the south coast of Maui, hundreds of Hawaiians jumped into canoes and paddled out with pigs, fruit, and fish

to trade. The protected cove at the dry, barren foot of Haleakala where La Perouse dropped anchor now bears his name, La Perouse Bay, along with a small monument commemorating his visit as the first by a Westerner to the island. Contact with Western culture profoundly, and often tragically, changed things in Hawaii, but La Perouse Bay remains undeveloped. Go there and you'll find extensive remnants of the villages that La Perouse found, as well as pristine snorkeling waters.

THE TIME OF KAMEHAMEHA

An immediate impact of Western contact was an arms race between the rival chiefs of the various islands—one in which King Kamehameha of the Big Island took an early lead. It was an advantage that helped him become the first chief ever to control all of the islands. When he invaded Maui in 1790, he had something the Maui forces were no match for—muskets and cannons. His men landed on the beach at Kahului, chased Maui's defenders to the back of narrow Iao Valley (today a popular picnic spot), and slaughtered them, sealing his claim to the island.

Of Kamehameha's 21 wives, his favorite was the bright, headstrong Maui girl who became Queen Kaahumanu. After the old king's death in 1819, she sat down to dinner with men, violating a fundamental *kapu* that prohibited men and women from eating together, and shattering the elaborate *kapu* system upon which Hawaiian society had been organized. This spelled doom for the ancient gods, and made the job of the Protestant missionaries, who arrived on Maui in 1823, far easier than it might have been. If you make the long, winding drive to the remote town of Hana, you can hike along the water to the cave where Kaahumanu was born.

MISSIONARIES, SUGAR & TOURISM

The missionaries established themselves in Lahaina, the capital of the Hawaiian Kingdom from 1820 until 1845 (at which point it moved to Honolulu). The seminary they established on the hillside above the town has since become a public high school (the oldest school west of the Rocky Mountains). The printing press they built here to publish Hawaiian-language Bibles, textbooks, and newspapers is one of the highlights of a self-guided tour of Lahaina's many historic sites.

The missionaries often clashed with the whalers, who had beat them to Hawaii by a few years, and who, after long months at sea, were as devoted to the flesh as the missionaries were to the spirit. Lahaina was one of their favorite ports. Drunken and frustrated seamen sometimes rampaged in the dusty streets as the town's pious citizenry hid behind the closed shutters and locked doors of the New England–style homes they built. One of these homes, the oldest house on the island, still stands. At this home—what's now the Baldwin Home Museum—missionary doctor Dwight Baldwin ran his practice, shared his faith, and raised his large family. One of his sons went into business with another missionary son, creating a company that grew to become one of the most powerful commercial and political forces in the islands, Alexander & Baldwin, Inc. The company started out producing sugar and expanded into shipping, ranching, and, ultimately, real estate and development. It still produces sugar on Maui today, and the tall smoke stacks visible from all around the central plain belong to its mill. In the shadow

of the smokestacks sits a little museum (p. 287), where you can peer into Maui's plantation past and get a sense of how the plantation era and all the new ethnic groups it brought to the islands shaped the Hawaii of today.

Sugar was king on Maui, but no longer. Tourism, once the cocky upstart, has ascended the throne. Population and building booms accompanied the economic transformation. Since 1970 Maui's population has tripled to nearly 130,000 people, not counting the 40,000 visitors on the island on any given day. Along with all the new faces have come traffic jams and sprawling development. Sleepy beach towns that once lined long stretches of the sunny south and west coasts have turned into luxurious resort areas and condominium conurbations. Maui has more condo units put to use as vacation rentals than all the other islands combined, and the dollar-wise will find some of the island's best deals on accommodations among them.

The enormous influx of newcomers who chased their dreams to Maui and never left has given the island its dubious distinction of being the most mainland-like of all the Hawaiian Islands. But local culture—Hawaii's unique amalgamation of Hawaiian ways, Western ways, and the ways of all the ethnic groups that came as plantation labor—still thrives. It just does so in dilution. You can spend a long time on Maui without meeting anyone who was actually born here. The chances that whoever is mixing the mai tai or skippering the tour boat came from California or Minnesota or France are as good as the chances that they're originally from Hawaii.

Before my plane touched down again at Kahului Airport, I thought changes like this one would upset me. But a few days after returning to the island following my long absence, I awoke on the north shore, where the iron-rich volcanic soil colors everything—the sidewalks, the trees, the chickens—a cinder red. And as the sun's first golden light mixed with that indelible color to create the unmistakable hues of a Hawaiian dawn, I realized Maui's true charm. You can't help but love her just as she is.

LAY OF THE LAND

Before anything else, let's first get acquainted with the several distinct parts of Maui and some of its towns.

WEST MAUI

West Maui is the most popular area of the island for visitors (with South Maui a close second). This is where the bustling tourist mecca of **Lahaina** is, an old New England–style whaling town that's now teeming with T-shirt shops, art galleries, jewelry stores, restaurants, bars, nightlife, historic sites, boat tours, and fun. The only thing Lahaina lacks is enough parking. Further north is **Kaanapali Resort,** with 3 miles of golden sand beach and two championship golf courses. Even further north, a long stretch of beachfront condominiums runs through the former fishing villages of **Honokowai, Mahinahina, Kahana,** and **Napili** (Napili is where the best beach and most desirable—though not necessarily the most expensive—condos are). Surrounded by pineapple fields at the end of the line is the **Kapalua Resort,** domain of two exclusive hotels and some swanky, phenomenally pricey vacation-rental homes and condos.

The Valley Isle

Maui's nickname, "The Valley Isle," is derived from the 7-mile-wide isthmus between the West Maui Mountains and Haleakala.

CENTRAL MAUI

Sugar cane covers much of the broad central plain between **Haleakala** and the **West Maui Mountains,** the two volcanoes that constitute Maui. Three highways connecting the north shore to the south traverse the plain. The twin cities of Wailuku and Kahului occupy the north part of the plain. Although they butt up against each other and have no distinguishable boundary, they have distinct characters. **Wailuku,** the seat of county government, has an old, hilly downtown, with an interesting mix of small shops and eateries and a historic walking tour. **Kahului,** the younger city, has long since eclipsed Wailuku as the island's commercial center. It was created in the 1950s by Alexander & Baldwin as a suburban "Dream City" where the company's plantation workers could own their own homes. Now it has the major airport and the island's only deep draft harbor, as well as shopping malls, box stores, and strip development reminiscent of many places on the mainland.

SOUTH MAUI

South Maui's coastline runs from north to south along the warmest, driest part of the island. At the southernmost end, in **Makena**, the paved road passes through the **Ahihi-Kinau Natural Area Reserve,** where Haleakala's last eruption poured down the mountain into the sea. The road dead-ends at pristine **La Perouse Bay,** where Maui's contact with the Western world began.

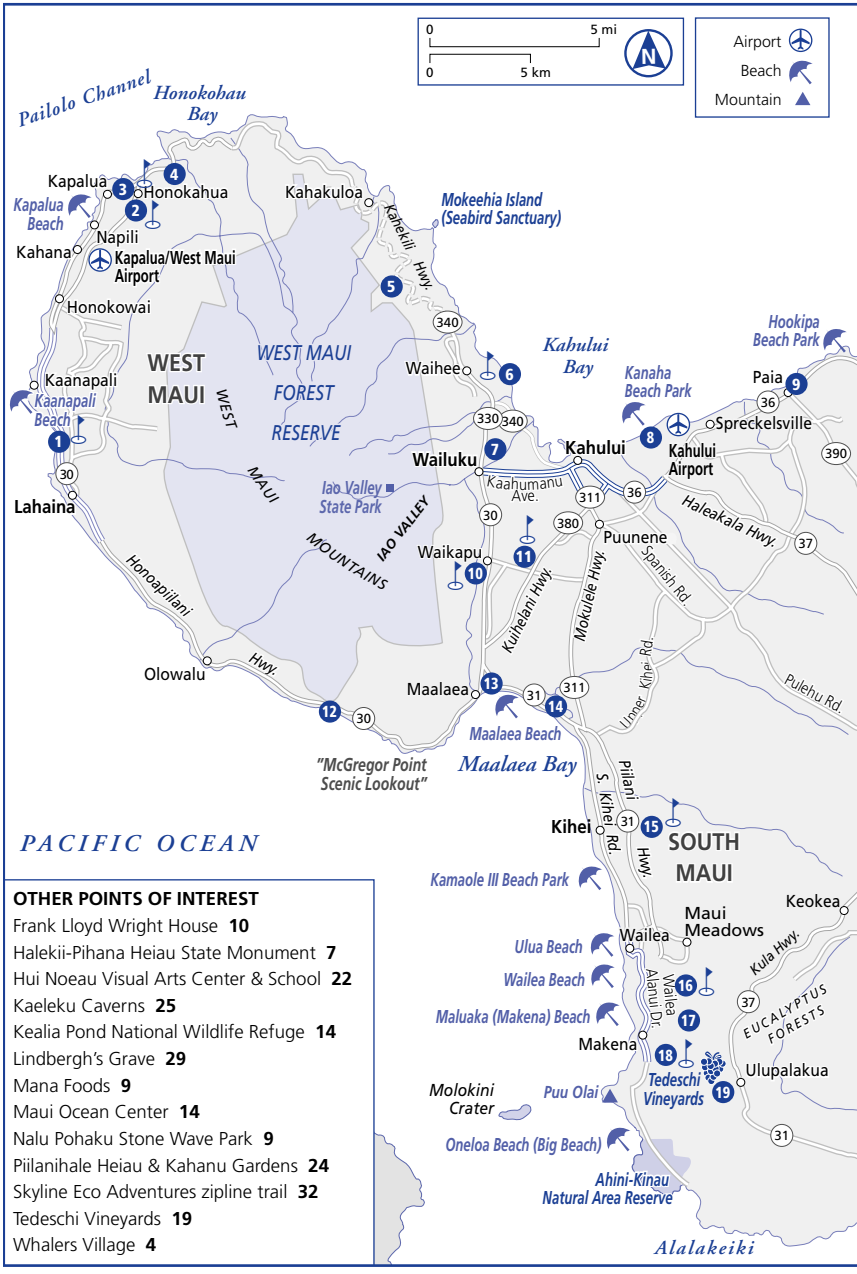
To the north, the side-by-side **Makena** and **Wailea resorts** have five championship golf courses and six luxury hotels between the two of them, as well as some exceptionally nice beaches. Though the beaches might seem like the private domains of the hotels, they belong to the public, as do all of Hawaii's beaches.

Wailea's manicured green landscaping gives way abruptly to the more disorderly and democratic landscape of **Kihei,** which is a long wall of beachfront condominiums and a series of shopping complexes. Kihei is where much of the action is—the mai tais, the dancing, the bargain sushi. It also happens to be where some of the best deals on accommodations, especially in condominiums, can be found.

A large wetlands area called the **Kealia Pond National Wildlife Refuge** separates Kihei from the small community of **Maalaea** to the north. Maalaea features a small boat harbor with a fleet of tour boats, a beachfront condominium community, a world-class aquarium, a few shops and restaurants, a miniature golf course, and the strongest winds on the island.

UPCOUNTRY

The high, cool slopes of **Haleakala** comprise the region known as upcountry Maui—a world of forestland, farmland, ranchland, and small communities. **Makawao,** one of the larger small communities, has a two-street downtown that



OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST

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Kipahulu campground **28**
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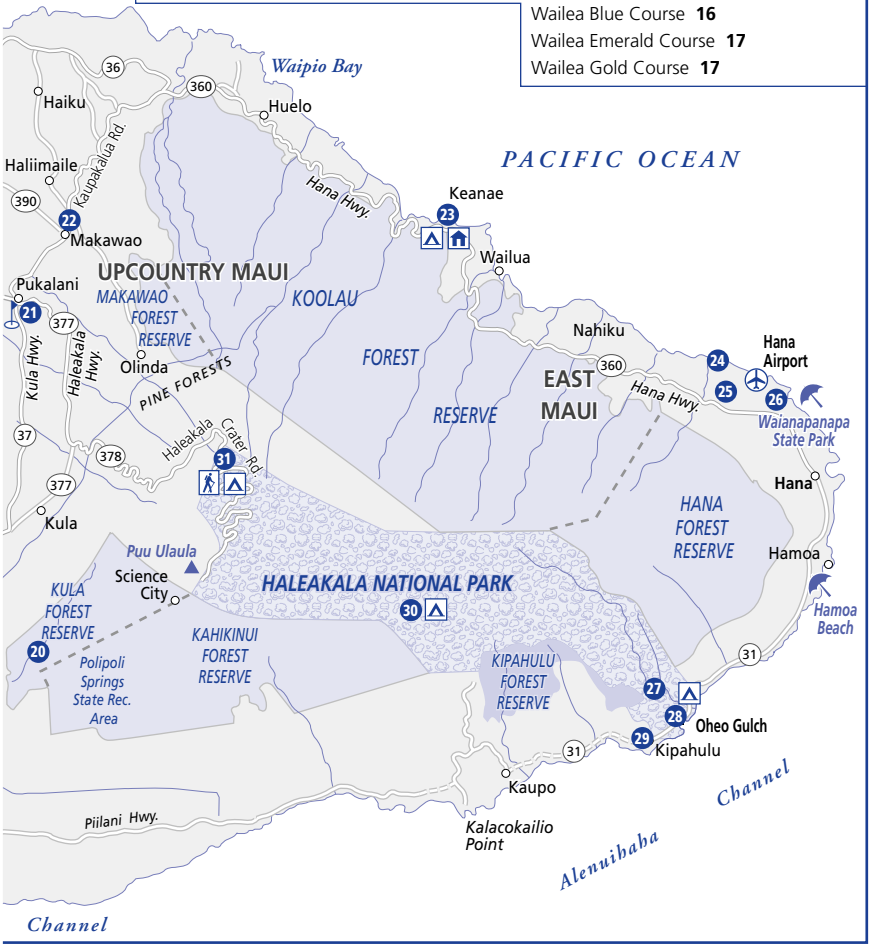
Puklani Country Club **21**
Waiehu Municipal Golf Course **6**
Wailea Blue Course **16**
Wailea Emerald Course **17**
Wailea Gold Course **17**



was once solely about cowboys. Now it's all about cowboys, sushi, and yoga, with a bunch of art galleries thrown in. The steep road to the summit of Haleakala cuts through the rich upcountry farming area known as **Kula,** where Maui onions, Kula greens, orchids, carnations, and otherworldly flowers called protea all thrive. **Polipoli Springs State Recreation Area** has camping, hiking, mountain biking, and mist-filled conifer forests reminiscent of Northern California. Several ranches offer horseback riding, and one entrepreneur has strung steel cables across a deep gulch in a eucalyptus forest and offers zipline rides along them (see Skyline Eco Adventures on p. 314).

PAIA & HAIKU

Paia was fading as a sugar mill town in the 1960s and 1970s when the hippies arrived. They were joined in the 1980s by windsurfers who had discovered the blustery, wave-jumping fun they could have at nearby Hookipa Beach Park, now known as "the Windsurfing Capital of the World." With its new blood, the old plantation town remade itself as the hippest, funkiest little town on the island, filled with great restaurants, unique boutiques, hard bodies, and the best health-food store on Maui—Mana Foods (p. 267)—conveniently located in Paia on the road to Hana. Haiku, another old plantation community, is 10 minutes away. Its center of things is an old cannery that's been transformed into a shopping area, with a fancy yoga studio, a few restaurants, and a bike-rental shop that offers downhill rides from the summit of Haleakala to the coast. Most of the rest of Haiku is tucked away in the boonies, out of sight.

HANA & THE ROAD TO IT

Hana is 3 hours and a world away from Kahului. It's an heirloom of old Hawaii, meaning it has the highest concentration of people with Hawaiian ancestry on the island. But nowadays, it's the journey to Hana—rather than Hana itself—that draws people. The 54-mile drive along the narrow, winding Hana Highway runs along the lush, cliff-lined windward side of the island, through rainforest, and past taro farms, fruit stands, *heiau* (temples), and a multitude of waterfalls. Beyond Hana, you'll reach the Kipahulu section of Haleakala National Park, one of the panhandles of the park that descends from the summit to the coast. Here is where you'll find the magnificent Oheo Gulch, with its series of waterfalls and swimming spots that step down through steep rainforest terrain to the sea.

GETTING TO & AROUND MAUI

Most flights to Maui land at **Kahului Airport,** on the north side of the island. Major airlines offer nonstop or direct flights to Kahului from several mainland cities. International flights get only as close as Honolulu (with the exception of two Canadian flights). In addition to the main airport, there's a small airport with interisland service on West Maui, and there's a commuter airport with some interisland flights in Hana.

Finally, Ferry Service

You may want to put off your trip to the islands until 2007. That's the year the **Hawaii Superferry** is scheduled to begin offering ferry service—something Hawaii has been sorely lacking—between Honolulu, Maui, and Kauai. Service to the Big Island is expected to begin in 2009. With walk-on passenger fares of $50, the ferry would be the most economical way to travel between islands, opening up a wealth of possibilities for tourism.

INTERISLAND TRAVEL

At press time, a new airline run by Phoenix-based **Mesa Air Group** was expected to begin service in 2006, offering flights between Honolulu and Maui, the Big Island, and Kauai. In the meantime, **Aloha Airlines** and **Hawaiian Airlines** continue to dominate interisland travel. Their over-the-counter fares for flights between Honolulu and Kahului run about $100 one-way. You can save about $25 if you book online. The following three smaller airlines also serve Maui and usually offer lower fares than the two big carriers, with one-way fares ranging from $65 to $100, and online discounts available. Before you book with Hawaiian or Aloha, definitely look into what these smaller carriers offer.

Island Air (☎ 808/877-5755; www.islandair.com) flies direct from Kahului to Hilo and Kona on the Big Island, as well as to Molokai, Honolulu, and Kauai. Its prop-driven planes carry 37 passengers.

Mokulele Flight Service (☎ 866/260-7070; www.mokulele.com) flies from Maui to the Big Island, Lanai, and Molokai in its nine-passenger aircraft. It also flies between Kahului and Hana.

Pacific Wings (☎ 888/575-4546 or 808/873-0877; www.pacificwings.com) has nine-passenger aircraft flying between Maui and Honolulu, the Big Island, and Lanai. It also has commuter service from Kahului to Hana.

For more details on how to find low airfares, see p. 437.

GETTING AROUND

Maui's limited **public transportation** system is not a good way for visitors to get to and from the airport or around Maui. Service is limited to Central, West, and South Maui; it takes forever; and there's no bus stop at the airport. You're better off with a **rental car.** If you're hell-bent on riding the bus, you should know this: The bus doesn't run on Sunday; no surfboards, boogie boards, or bicycles are allowed; no change is made; and no transfers are given. For more information on Maui's buses, call ☎ 808/270-7511 or go to www.co.maui.hi.us/bus.

Car-rental rates on Maui, like everywhere, fluctuate with supply, demand, and the season. If you avoid the high seasons and get lucky, you may get an economy car for less than $200 per week, including all taxes and fees. If you hit the island when rates are high, you could end up paying close to twice that. All the big national chains and some local ones are here.

Rush Hour

Rush-hour traffic on Maui runs from 6 to 9am and 3 to 6pm. If possible, time your arrival to avoid it.

Shuttle Service

If you're not renting a car, and you don't want to fork out the taxi fare, try the **Executive Airport Shuttle** ✯✯✯ (☎ 800/833-2303 or 808/669-2300; www.mauishuttle.com), which will carry you to your hotel, condo, bed-and-breakfast, friend's house, or wherever for less than cab fare (which clocks in at $2/mile, so unless you're only traveling a short distance, you'll do better with the shuttle). It serves most of the island, from upcountry to west Maui, and offers huge discounts for parties of two. From Kahului Airport to Kihei, it costs about $24 for one and just $26 for two (a taxi would cost about $40); from the airport to Lahaina, it costs $36 for one and $38 for two (taxi: $55); to Paia, it costs $18 for one and $20 for two (and here the cab fare would be the same). Reservations are required. If you try to book something after you arrive, there's about a 2-hour wait. It operates from 5am to 10pm.

SpeediShuttle (☎ 877/521-2085 or 808/242-7777; www.speedishuttle.com), Maui's other big airport-shuttle firm, doesn't have the steep discounts for two passengers that Executive Airport Shuttle does. But if Executive Airport Shuttle won't have you, you can count on SpeediShuttle to get from the airport to Kihei for about $25 per person, and to Lahaina for about $38 per person. It doesn't serve Paia, Hana, or upcountry. Reservations required. Hours are from 7am to 10pm, and there's a 10% discount on round-trips.

MAUI ACCOMMODATIONS, BOTH STANDARD & NOT

With the average price of a hotel room on Maui hovering around $200 per night, the Valley Isle certainly doesn't seem like the Budget Isle at first glance. But don't be discouraged. Maui has Hawaii's highest concentration of outrageously expensive resort hotels, and all those swanky rooms, with their koa furnishings, marble bathrooms, and $300-and-up rates, skew the average. Budget travelers on Maui can still find an ample selection of reasonably priced, and reasonably nice, places to stay. These include condominiums, small hotels, hostels, bed-and-breakfasts, vacation rentals, cottages, a treehouse, and—most affordable of all (actually free in some cases)—campgrounds.

Note: When looking at room rates in this chapter, don't forget to add Hawaii's 11.42% accommodations tax to the total.

Travel During the Low Season & Save

To keep things simple, I've focused on high-season rates in my descriptions of hotels and other lodgings. But during the **low seasons** of **spring and fall** (minus Thanksgiving), you'll typically pay 10% to 15% less for a room or condo than during the rest of the year. This is when budget travelers should strike. Not only will you find better deals on accommodations, you'll discover a more relaxed Maui altogether.

Maui's **high season** for tourism generally runs for the 4 months from **mid-December through mid-April,** when North America's winter amplifies Hawaii's call. The upsurge of family summer travel from **June through August** makes summer another high season at many locations, and the week around **Thanksgiving** can be a mini–high season as well.

To complicate things, each individual property or rental agency determines if and precisely when it will have a high season. To further complicate things, some add a third tier of rates during "shoulder seasons," between the high and low seasons, and some celebrate the holidays by jacking their rates up higher than ever and by adding restrictions, like 1-week minimums. A few places, it's encouraging to note, have fixed rates year-round.

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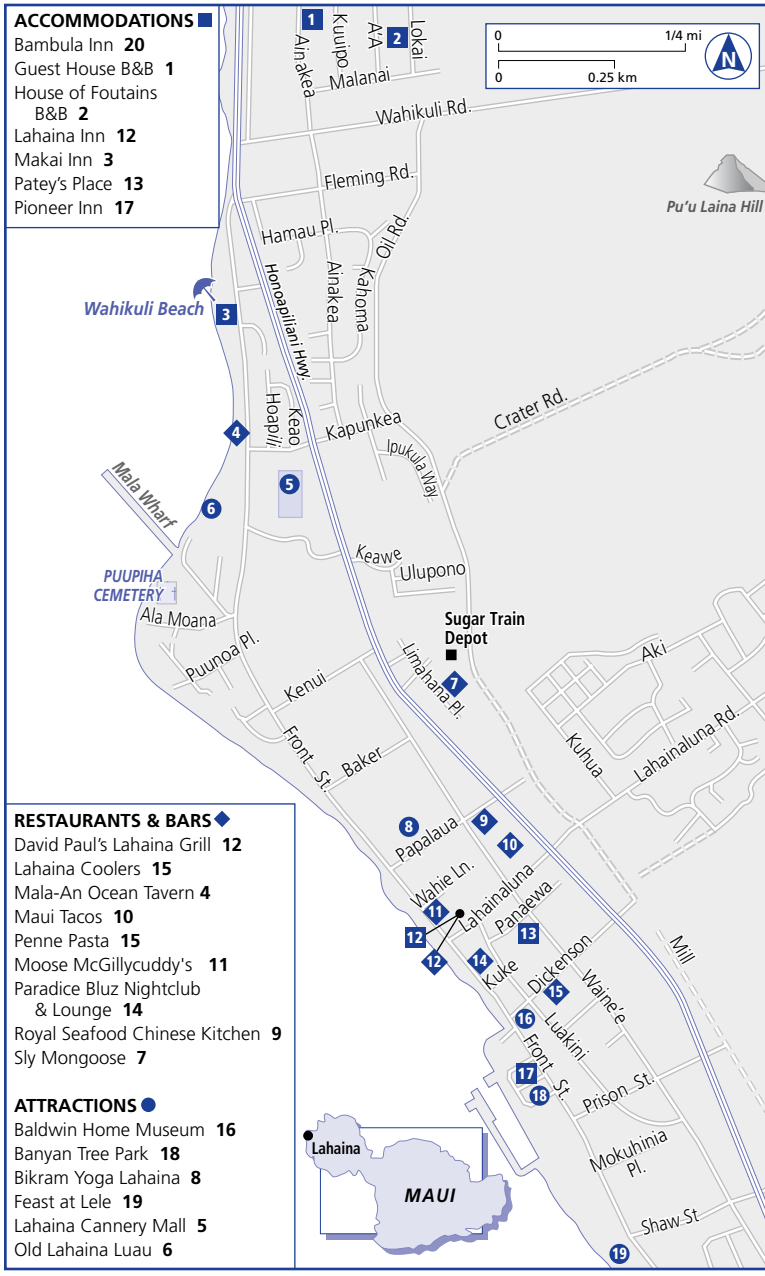
Average price per night for one double room: $ = Up to $100; $$ = $101 to $150; $$$ = $151 to $200; $$$$ = $201 and up

WEST MAUI: IN & NEAR LAHAINA

What's it like to stay in Lahaina? The city is like Waikiki with a height ordinance and a sense of history. Both places are party towns swarming with tourists looking for a good time. But where Waikiki sprouted modernist high-rises to form a network of deep concrete canyons, Lahaina stuck close to the ground and retained some of the 19th-century charm from its rowdy whaling years. Accommodations in Lahaina run the gamut from small hotels and a single hostel in the historic center,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Keawe
Ulupono
PUUPIHA CEMETERY
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MAUI

to bed-and-breakfasts and condos in the neighborhoods on the north and south ends of town.

$ In the heart of town, just a block off of Front Street, you'll find the ultimate bargain-priced deal on accommodations in West Maui at Lahaina's only hostel, **Patey's Place** ★ (761 Wainee St.; ☎ 808/667-0999). Rates, including tax, range from $22 for a bunk in a small dorm room to $71 for a double with private bathroom. A simple, well-run place, with limited parking, Patey's is filled with the friendly, economy-minded sorts who frequent hostels everywhere. Within a half-hour of poking my head in the door, a U.S. Navy sailor on shore leave told me the story of how his ship fired a warning shot across the bow of a pleasure craft that ventured too close earlier in the day, and I had made plans with a pretty German school teacher to go out for a beer.

$–$$ Parking doesn't come easily in Lahaina, sometimes even in the pay lots. At one lot, an overly eager attendant stuck a ticket under my windshield while I was standing at the automated payment station feeding $5 into the machine. (He unticketed me when I showed him the receipt.) One of the nice things about staying at **Bambula Inn** (518 Ilikahi St.; ☎ 800/544-5524 or 808/667-6753; www.bambula.com) is that you can ditch your car there and explore Lahaina by foot. Located in a private home in a quiet residential neighborhood just south of the historic district, this place is about a 10-minute walk into the heart of town. Besides its convenient location, Bambula Inn offers two simple, cheerful studios, for $85 and $95, plus a stand-alone cottage for $120. The owner, an aging French seafarer named Pierre, lives on-site, and periodically invites guests to sail with him on his little 22-foot sloop, the *Bambula.*

$–$$ Of all the places to stay in Lahaina, the one that strikes the best balance between ambience and affordability is **The Makai Inn** ★★★ kids (1415 Front St.; ☎ 808/662-3200 or cell 808/870-9004; www.makaiinn.net). Rooms in this waterfront two-story walk-up are arranged along a U-shaped courtyard with a tenderly kept tropical garden and a teeming population of birds in it. Most rooms have great ocean views, with blazing Lahaina sunsets and breaching whales (in winter) right outside the windows. Rates run from $85 to $151 for one-bedrooms with kitchens. A huge two-bedroom, family-size unit with a kitchen goes for $135. The rooms are breezy, spacious, and appointed with rattan furnishings and other tropical touches. It's too far to walk from here to the town center, but you can easily stroll to the Cannery Mall (p. 322). You won't find televisions or phones in the rooms here, but you will find Monopoly, Scrabble, and chess. This is the kind of low-rent, picture-perfect place where you could hole up indefinitely, content to play board games, watch whales, and wonder when the secret beach will emerge. (During certain low tides, a miniature white-sand beach materializes at the base of The Makai Inn's seawall, though most of the time it's just a seawall without a beach.)

$$ North of town, in a hillside residential neighborhood halfway between Lahaina's historic center and the Kaanapali Beach Resort (but too far from either to walk), you'll find two nice traditional bed-and-breakfasts. The first, **The Guest House** ★★ (1620 Ainakea Rd.; ☎ 800/621-8942 or 808/661-8085; www.mauiguesthouse.com), has four attractive rooms ranging from $129 to $149, each

Don't read any further about hotels . . . just purchase a package.

by Pauline Frommer

Most travel guides relegate packages—travel programs where airfare, a hotel, and sometimes a car are bundled together and then sold as a unit—to the back of the book, hidden in an appendix. But having studied this segment of the industry for many years, I know that these shortcuts can sometimes be tremendous money savers. The simple truth is: Large companies that consistently buy blocks of hotel rooms or airfares are going to be able to get better prices than you and I. This doesn't work for every destination, but in Hawaii, Oahu and Maui have been blessed with some remarkable deals over the years. A firm called **Pleasant Holidays** (☎ 800/742-9244; www.pleasantholidays.com) has consistently featured deals from the West Coast that can drop the cost of a vacation on this pricey isle, down to about $100 a day, for airfare from the U.S. mainland and a hotel. You won't always find these prices, but they're regular enough to be noted here. Similar, if not always as cheap, deals can be had from such companies as:

- **Funjet Vacations** (☎ 888/672-4893; www.funjet.com)
- **United Airlines Vacations** (☎ 888/854-3899; www.unitedvacations.com)
- **SunTrips** (☎ 800/SUN-TRIPS; www.suntrips.com)
- **Our Cruise Co.** (☎ 800/578-5760; www.ourcruiseco.com)
- **American Airlines Vacations** (☎ 800/321-2121; www.aavacations.com)
- And the big three: **Expedia** (www.expedia.com), **Travelocity** (www.travelocity.com), and **Orbitz** (www.orbitz.com)

As you might expect, the deals are always best from California, which provides the most frequent (and shortest) air service to Hawaii. Sometimes—but not always—a great deal can turn sour when you try to fly from anywhere other than the left coast (conversely, the add-on fares can be quite reasonable, so do check). Also note that packages are not good for solo travelers. Since the price you pay is based on double occupancy, the mark-up for singles will usually wipe out any savings. And you should always crunch the numbers before buying: Double the price and subtract out what you think you'd pay for airfare (you can go to www.airfarewatchdog.com for average airfares on routes worldwide).

Often, however, these packages will save you hundreds of dollars or put you in a cushy beachfront hotel for the price you'd regularly pay at a more humble property several blocks from the beach. They're worth checking out.

equipped with private lanai and bubbling soft-tub Jacuzzi. This place looks awful from the street, but once you get past the brown plywood fence, it's terrifically charming. The owner has living quarters here, as the county requires of all bed-and-breakfast operators, but more than any other B&B that I've seen in Maui, The Guest House feels like it belongs to the guests—you don't feel like you're in somebody else's space. You also get free high-speed Internet, a vast collection of

videos and DVDs, a living room with a 42-inch plasma-screen TV, an oversize swimming pool to lounge around, full use of the kitchen, French toast in the morning, and a refrigerator—stocked with eggs, condiments, and other basics—that's open to raiding any time. Scuba divers love this place—they get discounts on boat dives through The Guest House's activities company, Trinity Tours (☎ 808/661-8085; www.mauiguesthouse.com/activities.htm).

$$–$$$ A few blocks away from The Guest House is the **House of Fountains B&B** ★ (1579 Lokia St.; ☎ 808/667-2121; www.alohahouse.com), which has six rooms from $115 to $160, in a spacious, spotless contemporary home with white tile floors and handmade koa furniture. Rooms are large, with the same spotless white tile as the rest of the house. Run by a German woman and her Hawaiian husband, Daniella and Don Atay, you'll learn more about Hawaiian culture here than just about anywhere else you could stay on Maui. The living room and dining area, where sumptuous hot breakfasts are served, double as a private museum with a small collection of artifacts from throughout the Polynesian Triangle. Don participates in a Native Hawaiian revivalist group, *Na Koa Kau I Ka Meheu O na Kupuna* ("Warriors Who Walk in the Footsteps of Our Ancestors"), and he's got some mean-looking weaponry on display, such as his sharks-teeth war club. The warrior thing aside, he's a nice guy and happy to talk culture with anyone who's interested. A lot of Germans stay here.

$$–$$$ Back in the historic center, the **Lahaina Inn** (127 Lahainaluna Rd., just off Front St.; ☎ 800/669-3444 or 808/661-0577; www.lahainainn.com) creates a Victorian-era illusion in its small, clean, television-free rooms. All 12 of them are on the second floor of a historic building, and upstairs from Lahaina's most celebrated center of haute cuisine, David Paul's Lahaina Grill (p. 265), where guests of the inn get a $10 discount. Each room has hardwood floors, floral wallpaper, and an indiscriminant hodgepodge of antiques (expect to see many intimate portraits of long-forgotten people whom no one can identify and who seem to have no connection to Hawaii). Still, the beds are comfortable and the wooden rockers on the lanais of the oceanview rooms, which start at $150, are a lovely touch. The mountainview rooms, which could more accurately be called parking-lot-view rooms, go for $130. Parking costs $5.

$$$ Nearby, and adjacent to Lahaina Banyan Tree Park, the heart of the historic district, you'll find the **Pioneer Inn** (650 Wharf St.; ☎ 800/457-5457 or 808/661-3636; www.pioneerinn-maui.com). Built in 1901 on the town's main square, the inn's street-side rooms open onto a veranda that affords front-row balcony seating for Lahaina's crazy parade of street life. These small, tidy rooms are great if you've come to party, as people have for generations, but if you turn in early, you might have trouble sleeping with all the bumping car stereos, noise-making skateboarders, and bellowing bar-goers passing by. The courtyard rooms are much quieter. All of the rooms are furnished as though the calendar still reads 1901. They start at $155 but can be found online for $30 less at sites such as www.orbitz.com. Low-season rates are better, too. Guests stay in an L-shaped addition that was built in the 1960s in the plantation style of the original structure, which is where the lobby and the rollicking bar are still located (the original rooms, too dilapidated for guests, were converted to storage areas and an apartment for the manager). Parking is free but located 2 blocks away. Fully-equipped kitchens and laundry facilities round out the amenities.

Lahaina's Two Condos

$$–$$$ Lahaina has just two condos. On the north end of town, wedged between Front Street and the sea, you'll find **Lahaina Roads** (1403 Front St., Lahaina). Every unit in this older four-story condo has a fantastic ocean view, with private lanais overlooking a nice seaside swimming pool. Just offshore is the Lahaina Roadstead, where ships have found safe anchorage since the first whalers dropped their hooks here in the early 19th century. A mix of year-round residents and vacationers stay here. Most of the vacation rentals are handled through **Klahani Travel** (p. 243), which offers one-bedroom units for $150 a night and two-bedroom units for $225. Better deals are occasionally available through Klahani's website. The two units I recently saw were decorated entirely differently, but both were clean and comfortable. You might find the traffic noise to be annoying from the back bedrooms, which are closest to the road, but beyond that point the units are peaceful and quiet. Despite its waterfront location, there's no beach here—just a seawall to sit on.

$$$–$$$$ Lahaina Shores Beach Resort (475 Front St.; for future reservations, call Classic Resorts, ☎ 800/642-6284 or 808/661-3339; for same-day reservations, call Lahaina Shores directly, ☎ 808/661-4835; www.lahainashores.com) is an enormous 199-unit condo just south of the historic town center. Unlike Lahaina Roads (above), this place is on an actual beach, and a nice one. The rates vary here quite a bit, from $185 for a studio on the mountain side of the building, to $225 for a studio on the ocean side, to $325 for a penthouse apartment. Studios have wall-beds, and while they're all decorated differently, the ones I most recently saw were well kept and quite tasteful. The one-bedroom units can sleep up to four, thanks to pull-out sofas. Better rates can be found at Lahaina Shores' website, or at sites like **Vacation Rentals by Owner (www.vbro.com),** where I came across a studio during high season for $139. Units are large and good for both families and retirees—you'll see a nice mix of old and young here. A classy-looking plantation-style facade makes what might have been a giant eye-sore actually eye catching.

WEST MAUI: FROM KAANAPALI TO KAPALUA

Built in the 1960s at the island's westernmost point, the **Kaanapali Beach Resort** became the first master-planned resort community in the United States. It has five hotels, seven vacation-condo complexes, 36 holes of golf, two tennis centers, and 3 miles of perfect white-sand beach. Although it's not as exclusive as the island's other two big resorts, **Wailea** and **Kapalua,** budget travelers will nevertheless find slim pickings in this area. But a couple of places (see below) are worth considering.

Along the gentle 10-mile stretch of coastline north of Kaanapali, a string of fishing villages could once be found. Now all that's left of these old places are the names: **Honokowai, Mahinahina, Kahana, Napili,** and **Kapalua.** At the end of the line, in what's now the Kapalua Resort, you'll find the Ritz-Carlton hotel, with its Ritz-Carlton prices. All along the way between Kaanapali and Kapalua, you'll also find condominiums, one after the other, high- and low-rises, with high and low prices. Among all the condos, you'll find a few shopping plazas and some beaches that are generally great for sunbathing, but not so good for swimming—with some notable exceptions. It's a short drive to Kaanapali or Lahaina, where

there are plenty of activities, and this can be a good area to hunt for deals. Beyond Kapalua, the coastline turns rugged, and there's nowhere to stay until you loop back around the island and get to Wailuku.

$–$$ The budget-friendly stand-out in the condominium area north of Kaanapali is the **Hale Maui Apartment Hotel** ★★ kids (3711 Lower Honoapiilani Rd.; ☎ 808/669-6312; www.maui.net/~halemaui), a distinctive mustard-yellow-colored walk-up apartment building that's dwarfed by the area's high-rise condos. The Hale Maui has one-bedroom suites that are larger, cheerier, and cheaper than many of the area's far more expensive condos, with plenty of room for families. Double-occupancy units range from $95 to $115, plus $15 per additional head. All have kitchens and lanais and require a 3-night minimum stay. (A short path leads to one of the better swimming beaches in the Honokowai-to-Kahana area, but a lumbering beachfront condo blots out most of the view.) Note that rooms have ceiling fans but no air-conditioning. A lot of Europeans stay here, many of them returnees who know a great deal when they find one. And finally, the family that owns the place lives on the top floor, and their old German shepherd keeps a half-lidded watch on the property during the day.

$$$–$$$$ You're most likely to find a deal on a Kaanapali condominium if you get away from the beach and head for the greens. The **Maui Eldorado** kids (2661 Kekaa Dr., Kaanapali; ☎ Outrigger 888/339-8585 or 808/661-0021; www.outrigger.com or www.mauieldorado.net) is Kaanapali's golf course condo complex. The rack rate for a studio starts at $239 a night, but with Internet specials through the Outrigger's website or Web discounters (such as www.orbitz.com), you might find the same studio for as low as $169. Units at the Eldorado are spacious and thus good for families, and the beach is just a short 10-minute hike along a path across the fairway. Although the units are well kept and the property is tidy and trim, the place has about as much charm as an office park. Still, if you find a good rate here, you should consider it. (There's so much to do in Kaanapali and in nearby Lahaina, you won't be in your room all that much anyway.)

$$$–$$$$ For a reasonable splurge, consider the **Kaanapali Beach Hotel** ★★★ (2525 Kaanapali Pkwy., Lahaina; ☎ 800/262-8450 or 808/661-0011; www.kbhmaui.com), where double-occupancy rooms start at $185, and online discounts can knock the price down even further. Package deals offer worthwhile discounts on golf, rental cars, and a variety of activities from surfing lessons to waterfall hikes. The Kaanapali Beach Hotel isn't the tallest, glitziest hotel on Kaanapali Beach, but it is definitely the most Hawaiian, partly due to its lack of pretense. The rooms are small but attractive. The rambling grounds, filled with rustling palms, plumeria, and guests splayed in lawn chairs, feel less like a fancy resort and more like a Sunday in the park, complete with picnic tables and a giant concrete checkerboard, played with red and black coconuts. The Hawaiian-ness also comes from the mandatory Hawaiian cultural training that employees here—from general manager to housekeeper—receive four times a year. These classes have filled the hotel with a friendly staff versed in Hawaiian traditions, language, and history. (This unusual program is also credited with higher employee retention, more congenial union relations, lower workers-comp costs, and two Hawaiian music

West Maui Condo-Rental Agencies

Maui Beachfront Rentals (256 Papalaua St., Lahaina; ☎ 888/661-7200 or 808/661-3500; www.mauibeachfront.com) has condo units in 15 West Maui condo complexes, with weekly rates starting at $125 per night. ***Rental-car tip:*** Check out online discounts with Avis.

Klahani Travel (at Lahaina Cannery Mall; ☎ 800/669-6284 or 808/667-2712; www.klahani.com) is mainly a travel agency. It handles a few vacation-rental condos (although a bit grudgingly), and it's the agency to go to if you want to book a room at the **Lahaina Roads** condo.

Maui Lodging (3636 L. Honoapiilani Rd., Honokowai; ☎ 800/487-6002 or 808/669-0089; www.mauilodging.com) handles a variety of condominium units throughout the west side. E-mail or phone them with your travel dates, and they'll get you a list of available units. Then you can log on to Maui Lodging's website to read up on the properties and take virtual tours.

recordings released by the workers.) Another plus: The hotel is home to an affordable, filling local-style eatery called **Mixed Plate,** which draws Maui residents to Kaanapali.

NAPILI & ITS APPEAL

Good deals are scattered throughout West Maui's world of condominiums, but apart from the Hale Maui Apartment Hotel (p. 242), none stand out above the rest in terms of either affordability or charm—not until you reach Napili, that is. The beach going improves markedly in this area, too. With a few exceptions, the beaches north of Kaanapali have reefs just offshore that tend to slice up the toes of swimmers. Napili Beach (p. 274) is different. It's a broad sandy crescent protected by rocky headlands on either end, with no coral around to accidentally kick. It's great for swimming, and it's widely regarded as one of Maui's best beaches, as is another spot on the other side of the north point, Kapalua Beach (p. 274).

Behind the Napili Beach is an inviting cluster of low-rise vacation-rental condominiums, built mostly in the 1960s under a height ordinance that kept them all beneath the tops of the palm trees. And better yet, although this is one of the most desirable places in West Maui to stay (the view of Molokai across the Pailolo Channel is enchanting), it's also delightfully affordable.

$$ For top affordability and charm, I highly recommend **Napili Village** ★★★ (5425 Lower Honoapiilani Rd.; ☎ 800/336-2185 or 808/669-6228; www.napilivillage.com). It has 23 studios and five one-bedroom units, which are small but nice. A few of the studios can be doubled in size (and price) by unlocking a door between them. They're all clustered around a courtyard filled with palm, plumeria, and banana trees, a swimming pool usually filled with kids, and a well-used barbecue. Among the Napili Beach condominium cluster, this is the odd condo

out because it doesn't have any beachfront rooms. But it's an easy trade-off to make for the price, especially because it's a mere 2-minute walk to the ocean. Studios start at $119 and peak at $139. The two Tongan housekeepers here, who embody the laid-back ambience of the place, chat in their native tongue while they work—or they just stop working altogether, sit down, and chat with the guests in English.

$$–$$$ The best beachfront deal here is **Hale Napili** ★★★ (65 Hui Dr.; ☎ 800/245-2266 or 808/669-6184; www.halenapilimaui.com), which has oceanview studios for $129, oceanfront studios for $165, and one-bedroom oceanfront apartments for $195, all with 3-night minimums. Rooms are a little roomier than others in the area, and you can't get any closer to the beach. There are only 18 units here, and they book up well in advance, so you need either luck or long-range planning to get in.

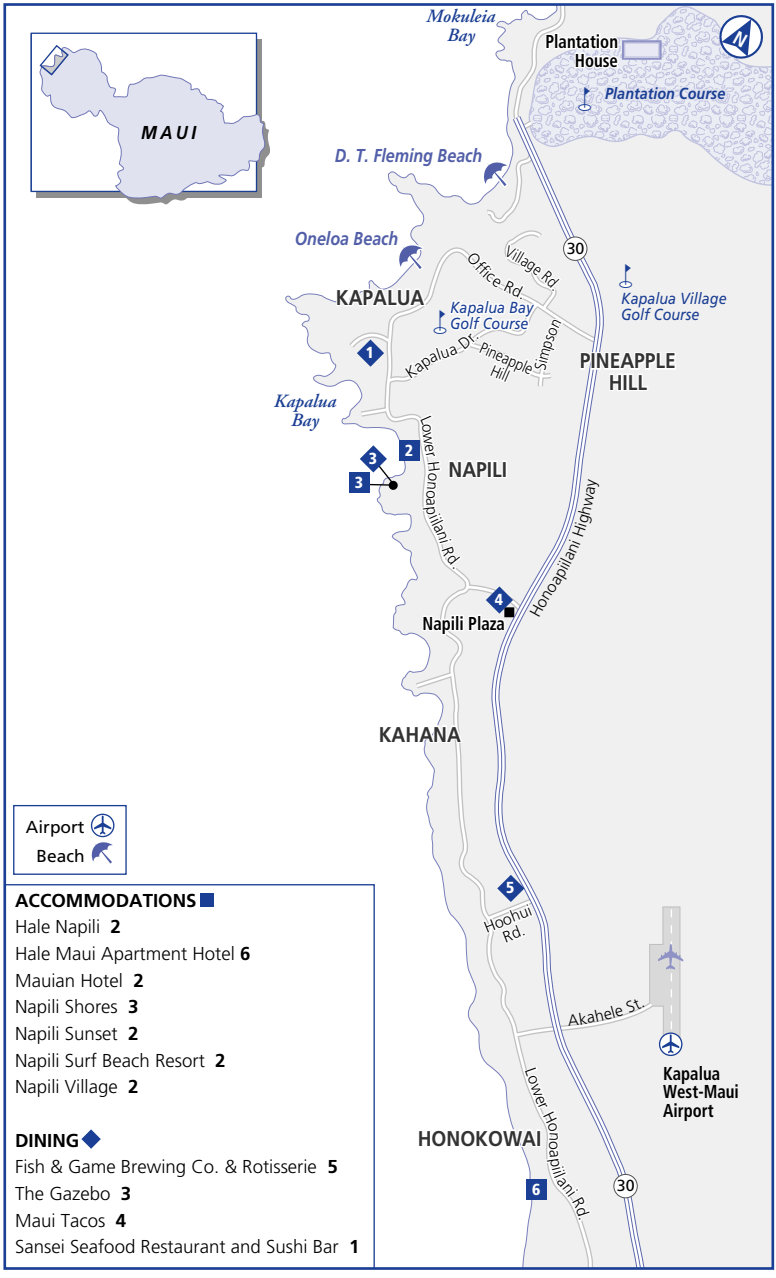
$$–$$$ The **Napili Sunset** (46 Hui Dr.; ☎ 800/447-9229 or 808/669-8083; www.napilisunset.com) has both beachfront one-bedroom studios, starting at $225, and studios in a separate building across the street, for $135. The beachfront studios are prime real estate, with fantastic views of Molokai, Napili Bay, and everything happening on Napili Beach. ***Two-for-one tip:*** It's not advertised, but a few of the one-bedroom units have lofts, making them essentially two-bedroom units at the same $224 one-bedroom prices. ***Webcam tip:*** For a real-time look at Napili Beach, check the webcam on the Napili Sunset website. Those in the know with a cellphone can stand in front of the cam, call friends on the mainland, give them the website address, then wave to them from Maui. The camera is trained on the beach, and you can do this whether or not you're a guest here.

Condos: Pros & Cons

Instead of the Valley Isle, Maui could be called the Condo Isle. It has put more privately owned condominiums to use as vacation rentals than all the other Hawaiian Islands combined. More than 100 of these "condo hotels," so-called by state tourism officials, line Maui's shores, with some 7,000 units among them dedicated to vacation rentals. That number rivals the 8,000 rooms in Maui's 31 major hotels.

Maui condos tend to be moderately priced, with rates ranging from around $100 to $250. Minimum stays of 3 nights are common, and rates drop for longer stays.

One of the biggest benefits of renting a condo is that it will have a kitchen or a kitchenette, allowing you to cook for yourself and reduce your food costs. One of the drawbacks is that Maui condos don't always include housekeeping service. (In some cases, though, they do.) All of the Napili condos reviewed here are among those that come with housekeeping, at no extra charge.



ACCOMMODATIONS ■

Hale Napili **2**
Hale Maui Apartment Hotel **6**
Mauian Hotel **2**
Napili Shores **3**
Napili Sunset **2**
Napili Surf Beach Resort **2**
Napili Village **2**

DINING ◆

Fish & Game Brewing Co. & Rotisserie **5**
The Gazebo **3**
Maui Tacos **4**
Sansei Seafood Restaurant and Sushi Bar **1**

$$$ The oldest place to stay on Napili Beach is **The Mauian Hotel** (5441 Lower Honoapiilani Rd.; ☎ 800/367-5034 or 808/669-6205; www.mauian.com), which offers studios from $165 to $195, and has lots of online discounts. The rooms are small and spartan, but the beach is so present and the surroundings so inviting that the tight quarters are easy to overlook. None of the rooms have televisions or telephones, but a community Ohana Room has both, along with board games, continental breakfasts, and yellowing photo albums documenting The Mauian's happy history.

$$–$$$$ Among the other good values in the Napili Beach condo cluster is **Napili Surf Beach Resort** ★ (50 Napili Place; ☎ 888/NAPILIS or 808/669-8002; www.napilisurf.com), which claims a narrow slice of beachfront and has studios starting at $145 and one-bedrooms starting at $220, both with kitchens. There are discounts for longer stays and online deals that change weekly. The units are bright and clean, and—for some reason—attract a lot of Canadian retirees. You'll find shuffleboard here, a complimentary mai tai party on Thursdays, and ceiling fans rather than air-conditioning.

$$$–$$$$ **Napili Shores** ★ kids (5315 Lower Honoapiilani Rd.; ☎ Outrigger 888/859-7867 or 808/669-8061; www.outrigger.com) sits on the rocky point at the south end of Napili Bay, a 2-minute walk from Napili Beach. It's a well-settled, family-oriented place with several two-story buildings set along a grassy common area that stretches toward Molokai and the deepwater channel separating it from Maui. The rooms are small and plain, and the whole place feels more motel-like than condolike, but in the sense of a fun motel where kids splash happily in the two pools and adults sit smiling behind their sunglasses, doing nothing at all. Rack rates for studios start at $229, but the prices can drop below $200 thanks to promotional deals on the Outrigger website, and I've found units at www.vbro.com for just over $100. Napili Shores has two restaurants, including The Gazebo (p. 265), whose macadamia-nut pancakes draw guests from the surrounding condos.

SOUTH MAUI: KIHEI

During a development boom that began in the 1970s, the small, sleepy beachfront community of Kihei grew into a sprawling land of condos and shopping plazas, about 6 miles long and 1 mile deep. It stretches along the sunniest, driest part of the island, and it's got some great beaches and views. It's also got restaurants, shopping, and nightlife galore, not to mention traffic. Dollar-wise travelers flock to Kihei, drawn by its cheap lodgings.

$–$$ In north Kihei, where the strip malls have thinned out and things are relatively quiet, you'll find a well-settled old place to stay called the **Nona Lani Cottages** kids (455 S. Kihei Rd.; ☎ 800/733-2688 or 808/879-2497; www.nonalanicottages.com). In the 1970s, the owners—a now-retired elderly couple—cleared the *kiawe* trees in their huge front yard and built eight attractive guest cottages there, which currently rent for $120 a night as doubles with 1-week minimums. You can comfortably fit up to four people in one of them, at $15 per extra head (and that includes the tousled heads of your kids; there's no children's

South Maui Condo Vacation-Rental Agencies

The town of Kihei has nearly half of all condominiums on Maui, and among them you can find good deals. The following agencies handle the bulk of Kihei's condo rentals. ***Beware:*** Most of them charge an outrageous reservation fee (usually around $25) for simply taking your reservation!

Kihei Maui Vacations (2395 S. Kihei Rd., Suite 206; ☎ 800/541-6284 or 808/879-7581; www.kmvmaui.com) has units in 60 condo complexes throughout south Maui. Rates start at about $100 per night for stays of 7 nights or longer, and sometimes you can find online specials for as little as $75 per night, with a 7-night minimum, during the off season.

Maui Condominium and Home Realty (2511 S. Kihei Rd.; ☎ 800/451-5008 or 808/879-5445; www.mauicondo.com) has units in 22 South Maui condos, with weekly rates starting at $110.

Maui Resort Vacation Rentals (1993 S. Kihei Rd., Unit 210; ☎ 800/441-3187 or 808/879-5973; www.mauiresort4u.com) has units in about 20 condo complexes in South and West Maui, with weekly rates starting at $97.

AA Oceanfront Condominium Rentals (1279 S. Kihei Rd., Suite 107; ☎ 800/488-6004 or 808/879-7500; www.aaoceanfront.com) has units in 20 South Maui condos, with weekly rates starting at $95.

Kumulani Vacations and Realty (1993 S. Kihei Rd., Apt. 216; ☎ 800/367-2954 or 808/879-9272; www.kumulani.com) has units in a dozen South Maui condos, with weekly rates starting at $115.

Condominium Rentals Hawaii (362 Huku Lii Place; ☎ 800/367-5242 or 808/879-2778; www.crhmaui.com) has units in 11 South and West Maui condos, with weekly rates starting at $120. Check the website for special discounts and packages.

discount here). Still, there's plenty of space to move around in and make a racket, so they're great for families. Each cottage has a kitchen and a bedroom, but none have phones or cable TV. Recently, the owners built a two-story addition to their home, living upstairs and renting three, modern, hotel-like rooms downstairs for $100 per night, with 4-night minimums (these units have refrigerators but not full kitchens). All rates drop for longer stays, and fall below $100 during the off season. A nice stretch of Sugar Beach (p. 271) is just steps away from the front row of cottages—the only thing is that those steps cross the highway. If traffic's din drives you mad, go for the hotel-like rooms at the back of the property. They're quiet.

$$ Kihei has a few reasonably priced hotels, including the laid-back **Aston Maui Lu Resort** (575 S. Kihei Rd.; ☎ 800/922-7866 or 808/879-5881; www.maui-lu.com). It started out in the late 1950s as the vacation retreat of a Canadian timber baron. His lodgelike home has become the hotel's main lobby, and his stately palm groves and expansive lawns now bear several low-rise buildings with rooms starting at $139. You can get a big discount by booking online; at press time, rooms were going for $113. Off-season rates drop below the $100 mark. All rooms have air-conditioning and lanais, and the units on the ocean side of the highway face a nice sandy beach. This was Kihei's first hotel, and it serves as enchanting evidence of a slower-paced era before urban sprawl overtook South Maui. Some would call the Maui Lu run-down, but I prefer to think of it as a once-glamorous place that has grown comfortable with its sagging self, like a faded movie star who has settled into producing community theater. If you're okay with shabby chic, you'll like it here; it's a bit worn and frayed, but it's not uncomfortable.

$$ Kihei has some friendly bed-and-breakfasts, including a couple sharing the same cul-de-sac in a quiet neighborhood on the south end of town. **Two Mermaids on Maui Bed and Breakfast** (2840 Umalu Place; ☎ 800/598-9550 or 808/874-8687; www.twomermaids.com) is a nice, if unfortunately named, place in a tall contemporary home that had an ocean view until a neighbor's tree interfered. Two Mermaids offers two choices: a spacious poolside studio with a wall bed for $115 per night, or an even more spacious one-bedroom apartment with a big deck and an outdoor hot tub for $140. For an extra $40 you can add an auxiliary bedroom to either of these bright, colorful units. Each unit comes with a kitchen, a private entrance, a basket left outside your door in the morning with a continental breakfast in it, and an acoustic guitar. A three-night minimum stay is required. The name, if you're wondering, has to do with the two owners' preoccupation with scuba diving.

$–$$ One house away, you'll find an even better deal—though one with an equally unfortunate name—at **Maui What a Wonderful World Bed & Breakfast** (2828 Umalu Place; ☎ 800/943-5804 or 808/879-9103; www.amauibedandbreakfast.com), which has four rooms priced between $89 and $119. They are clean, roomy, a little dark, equipped with kitchenettes, and in a contemporary pole house, which has a big deck with an ocean view where the hosts, a pleasant married couple, serve hot breakfasts. Morning often brings cheese soufflés, banana-macadamia-nut pancakes, and French toast stuffed with cream cheese and berries. The story behind the naming of this place has to do with Louis Armstrong and a spur-of-the-moment decision made while filling out the application for a county B&B license.

SOUTH MAUI: WAILEA

The sunny, bustling, condo-thick strip of development that is Kihei comes to an abrupt and elegant end where Wailea begins. Opulent resort hotels, championship golf courses, and posh condominiums thrive on this otherwise parched leeward shore (with the help of five million gallons of water per day). This is the land of $10 mai tais and well-heeled guests so pampered that, at one hotel, they have a swim-in elevator to carry them to the top of a waterslide, which they may

Maui's Burgeoning Underground Vacation-Rental Market

Maui has 31 legal bed-and-breakfasts, licensed to do business by Maui County, though there are scores of unlicensed ones and other "illegal vacation rentals," as they're called (although there's nothing illegal about staying in one). At press time, the Maui County Council was mulling over ways to exert control over, and taxes from, this booming underground corner of the island's tourism industry. By the way, not all of Maui's legal bed-and-breakfasts actually serve hot breakfast, which they blame on a state law requiring B&Bs to have full-blown commercial kitchens before they can serve hot food. Some simply ignore the commercial kitchen requirement and serve hot meals anyway; many others offer continental breakfasts.

Most of the unauthorized vacation rentals can be found online, at sites like **www.vbro.com.** Sometimes, though, you just stumble upon them in Hawaii. I recently found one while driving through Kihei and spotting a discrete sign on a mailbox that read **Studio $65 a night** (1112 S. Kihei Rd.; ☎ 808/879-0446 or cell 808/298-4282). I stopped to investigate and found more than I expected. The Studio, as it's literally called, turned out to be a spacious apartment on the ground floor of the owners' two-story home. Also available here is The Hut, a shed-roofed, 350-square-foot cottage with full kitchen, one twin and one roll-away bed, and a small, private yard—for just $50. Beside The Hut sits The House, a tidy three-bedroom dwelling that you can have in its entirety for $145 a night, or where you can take one room for $50 and share the rest of the place with others. Each room has a festive theme: a raffia bed skirt and valances in The Hula Room, a surfboard and big-wave posters in The Surf Room, and pineapple colors and motifs in The Pineapple Room. One of the owners, who cleans condos for a living, moonlights as a travel agent, and she'll be happy to book tickets to shows, luaus, or whatever else you want to see and do.

ride indefinitely without emerging from the water or exerting themselves on the steps. It's a great place to visit (the beaches here are open to the public, and they're exceptionally nice), but it's no place for the budget-minded traveler. Rack rates for hotels *start* at around $370 and then begin to soar. Nonetheless, you can pull off a moderately priced splurge here in a condo, where rates at around $200 per night—and sometimes less—can be found.

Destinations Resorts Hawaii (in The Shops at Wailea, 3750 Wailea Alanui Dr.; ☎ 800/891-6249; www.drhmaui.com) handles many of the Wailea vacation-rental condos. It offers golf packages and typically throws in extras like free long-distance telephone service, high-speed Internet, and a fifth night free. It also has a concierge service that, among other things, will stock your refrigerator with organic produce just before you arrive. It inspects all of the condos it handles, and

How Can You Save on Condos?

Go off season. Although each property or rental agency sets its own high and low seasons, low season generally runs from mid-April to mid-June, and from mid-September to mid-December (excluding Thanksgiving). Rates are about 10% lower at those times.

Take a *mauka* room. The least expensive condo units tend to be on the *mauka* sides of their buildings, rather than the *makai* sides. You won't get an ocean view, but in Kihei at least, you might wake up looking at Haleakala before it draws up its midday cloud cover. Traffic noise could be the trade-off, so ask the rental agency how far back the condo is set from the highway before you commit.

Cut out the middle man. Dealing directly with the condo owner can yield lower rates than booking through an agency. Owners often list their units in the Sunday classified section of the *Maui News*. They also congregate at **www.vbro.com**, the vacation-rentals-by-owner exchange. High-season VBRO prices for Kihei condos generally run around $150. But sometimes you'll see something dirt-cheap, such as VRBO listing no. 8329, which I offer here not as an endorsement (I haven't seen it, I'm afraid, so I can't vouch for it), but as an example of what you may find at the low end of the spectrum: **Shores of Maui** condominium, $50 a night April 1 to December 15, $75 the rest of the year. One bedroom, one bathroom, sleeps five. Amenities include a full kitchen, phone, air-conditioning, cable TV, stereo, linens, and washer/dryer. Call ☎ 604/759-9471 (British Columbia). The owner assures us, "This condo is very comfortable and features all the amenities you have at home!"

Go for the Greens. In resort areas, look away from the beach and along the golf courses for the best deals.

rejects any that aren't in top shape—those usually get picked up by one of the Kihei-area rental agencies (p. 247). As at the Kaanapali Beach Resort, you'll find the best rates on condos away from the water and on the fairways. At Wailea's two golf-course condominium complexes, **Wailea Ekolu Village** and **Wailea Grand Champion Villas,** one-bedroom units start at $215 and $225, respectively. The off-season slices off about $30. Ekolu is the older property, with beautiful panoramic ocean views. Grand Champion is a little flashier, but it doesn't have the views. Both are roomy and clean, fit for families, and a good 15-minute downhill walk to Wailea's stunning beaches.

SOUTH MAUI: MAALAEA

Ten minutes north of Kihei, you'll find some moderately priced vacation rentals at the small condominium community in Maalaea. All 10 of the Maalaea condos

sit right on the water, and three—the **Malani A Kai,** the **Hono Kai Resort,** and the **Kai A Nalu**—front a white-sand beach. The others share a seawall or front the Maalaea Small Boat Harbor, where tour and charter fishing boats come and go all day. In addition to the harbor, Maalaea has a little shopping center, some restaurants, miniature golf, the Maui Ocean Center aquarium, and one of the world's fastest surf spots, Freight Trains, which breaks only on rare occasions. Other than that, it's pretty quiet here. But the central location makes Maalaea a strategic base for exploratory missions to all the other parts of the island. And it's not that far to Kihei for coffee.

Many of the Kihei-area rental agencies (p. 247) have units here, as does **Maalaea Bay Realty & Rentals LLC** (280 Haouli St., in the Hono Kai condominium; ☎ 800/367-6084 or 808/244-5627; www.maalaeabay.com). Four of us once spent a pleasant week in a two-bedroom, two-bathroom unit in the **Lauloa condominium,** available through **Kihei Maui Vacations** (2395 S. Kihei Rd., Suite 206; ☎ 800/541-6284 or 808/879-7581; www.kmvmaui.com) at $147 a night (or $36.75 per person) for weeklong stays, and at $119 a night ($28.75 per person) for month-long stays. Our unit had a double lanai, a big kitchen, one bedroom with no view, and one bedroom with an outstanding view of majestic Haleakala across sparkling Maalaea Bay, plus all sorts of homey amenities, including a CD player and a telescope for inspecting the harbor traffic or whales. The rooms had air-conditioning, but no one even considered turning it on because the trade winds are so brisk in Maalaea—due to a funneling effect caused by the West Maui Mountains.

UPCOUNTRY

The shoreline isn't the only place to stay on Maui. The serene mountain air and phenomenal views you'll find on Haleakala's upper western slopes make upcountry an appealing region, too.

$ There aren't a lot of accommodations in upcountry, but there are a few choices, including one of the best deals on the island: **Peace of Maui** ★★ (1290 Hailiimaile Rd., Hailiimaile; halfway between Paia and Makawao; ☎ 888/475-5045 or 808/572-5045; www.peaceofmaui.com). You can get a large bed in a tiny

The Biannual Maalaea Dust Storm

Situated between the ocean and a sugar-cane field, the Maalaea condominium community has two good neighbors—most of the time. However, once each odd-numbered year, the agricultural neighbor harvests cane, which kicks up great clouds of volcanic dust that coat everything—the trees, the cars, the insides of condos whose occupants didn't close the windows—in fine red dust.

Beware: If you're in the area around this time, be sure to find out about the harvest so you can close your windows while you're out (I once didn't, and returned to my condo to find powdery red dirt everywhere). It sounds bad, but dust beats the soot that used to cover everything here back when they burned cane stalks.

room here for $55. There are seven bedrooms, all on the ground level of a big cedar home in the country, with a family living upstairs. You share the kitchen, three bathrooms, the living room, and a high-speed Internet connection with the other guests. There's a skateboard ramp, too, which you can share with the kid who lives here. In addition, you can rent a beautiful two-bedroom cottage, with a panoramic view, for $120 a night. At about 1,000 feet, it feels like you're above it all here, yet you're still only half an hour from the airport and 10 minutes from the beach.

$$$$ Further above it all, at about 3,000 feet, the **Star Lookout** ★★★ (662 Thompson Rd., Kula; turn-off near Grandma's Coffee; ☎ 907/346-8028; www.starlookout.com) consists of a single cozy cottage, bent like an elbow to take full advantage of a view that sweeps across Maui's central plain from south shore to north. Surrounded by ranchland and lava outcroppings, it rents for $200 a night, with a 3-night minimum. With its sublime location (about half an hour from the beach), utter serenity, and woodstove, this could be an unforgettable romantic splurge for two. It could also be a budget-oriented group experience for six, considering it comes with one bedroom, a sleeping loft, and a bed in an alcove with a curtain. Star Lookout was named for its exceptional view of the night sky, but it could easily have another meaning, as its fence borders some of Oprah Winfrey's vast Maui landholdings, and one of her homes is nearby.

THE NORTH SHORE: PAIA

Drive 15 minutes east of Kahului Airport and you'll come to funky little Paia, a former sugar-mill town transfigured by hippies, windsurfing, and tourism into a colorful international crossroads with great restaurants and shopping.

$ In Paia you'll find all sorts of budget-friendly accommodations, including **Wabi-Sabi House** ★ (50 Puakou Place, Paia, about ¾ miles up Baldwin Ave. from the Hana Hwy. intersection; ☎ 808/579-8886; www.wabi-sabi.org). Once an early-20th-century plantation workers' home, Wabi-Sabi has recently been transformed into a vacation rental. Roughly translated from Japanese, *wabi-sabi* describes the aesthetic of finding beauty in the imperfect, the impermanent, and the incomplete. Applied to home decor, it puts a Zen Buddhist spin on "French country" or "shabby chic." It also characterizes the pleasant Bohemian vibe of Wabi-Sabi House, and Paia in general. The house has three simple bedrooms, which share a kitchen and living room; two of the bedrooms share a bathroom. They each rent for $60 to $80. An enclosed treehouse in the backyard goes for $70 (including outdoor bathroom facilities). There's also a one-bedroom apartment for $100, plus a washer and dryer, and a hot tub in the back yard. Located at the end of a dead-end street in a working-class neighborhood (a 10-min. walk from town, 15 min. to the beach), you can sometimes hear babies crying, roosters crowing, and classic rock blasting. But stiff trade winds and tropical gardening take the hard edge off the racket, and the place remains oddly tranquil.

$ Closer to town and cheaper still is **Rainbow's End Surf Hostel** ★★ (221 Baldwin Ave., Paia; ☎ 808/579-9057; www.mauigateway.com/~riki/res.htm). It's one of two Paia hostels, and the nicer one by far. Beds in the dorm rooms go for $25, including tax, while private rooms with their own shared bathroom and kitchen range from $55 to $65. You'll get a discount for an extended stay. The

young family that owns Rainbow's End lives downstairs, and they won't abide drinkers, druggies, or noisy guests, all of whom are summarily sent to the town's other hostel—which I wouldn't recommend unless you get booted from here.

$–$$ For another affordable, yet more romantic, option, look into **Spyglass House** (367 Hana Hwy.; ☎ 800/475-6695 or 808/579-8608; www.spyglassmaui.com), perched on a low sea cliff a short drive north of town. It's a vintage 1970s Northern California–style beach house, with high ceilings, hardwood floors, stained-glass windows, and a weathered wood exterior. In an adjacent cottage, small rooms with shared bathrooms go for $90; larger rooms with their own bathrooms in the cottage and the main house range from $120 to $150. Couples who've come to Maui to act like romantic fools do well here; there are plenty of private places along the cliff where they can gaze into each other's eyes.

$–$$$$ The owners of Spyglass House also run **Blue Tile Beach House** (459 Hana Hwy., Paia; ☎ 888/579-6446 or 808/579-6446; www.beachvacationmaui.com), a short drive further north. This hulking Mediterranean-style structure stands on a sandy cove, with decent summer snorkeling and wicked winter surf. Rates start at $90 for a clean, basic room and run to $250 for an oceanfront suite. Both houses have kitchens, where guests can prepare complimentary bagels, frozen waffles, and coffee. Both also add $30 to the nightly bill for stays of less than 3 days.

$–$$$$ At **The Inn at Mama's Fish House** (799 Poho Place, Paia; a mile north of town; ☎ 808/860-4852 or 808/579-9764; www.mamasfishhouse.com)—adjacent to the celebrated restaurant Mama's Fish House (p. 268)—don't let the ultra-swanky $475-per-night beachfront cottages put you off. Hidden behind them is a mixed bag of more reasonable options, including a $60 room, a $75 studio, a $145 two-bedroom apartment, and a couple of $175 one-bedroom cottages. A 3-night stay is required, but all of the accommodations are clean and modern. Although you won't have a view of Kuau Cove from your room, a short walk puts you within prime gazing distance.

HANA

Too many visitors drive the arduous winding road to Hana, look around a bit, and drive back in the same day. A better way to experience Hana is to stay in the area for a night or two, and there are plenty of affordable places to do that.

$ Joe's Place (4870 Uakea Rd.; ☎ 808/248-7033; www.joesrentals.com) is where shoestring travelers can lodge and share beaches with the millionaires who stay nearby at the Hotel Hana Maui (see below). Joe's has eight bare-bones rooms starting at $45 and peaking at $55. It has old furniture, worn carpets, bare walls, a group kitchen, and a dispiriting television room—but, on the positive side, it's all white-glove clean. Otherwise, it's got no real amenities, unless you count the Coke machine.

$ At the end of the street and around the corner from Joe's, lifelong Hana residents Fusae Nakamura and her husband, Zenzo, run **Aloha Cottages** ✪ (73 Keawa Place; ☎ 808/248-8420). All five units, located beside the Nakamura's home, have clean, simple redwood interiors. A studio equipped with refrigerator

and hot plate rents for $65, while the two- and three-bedroom apartments with full kitchens run from $85 to $95. But none of the rooms have phones, and only some have televisions. If you take no. 3, you'll have two bedrooms and the best view. A short walk from the bay or the ballpark, Aloha Cottages is centrally located, in as much as there's enough of Hana for anything to be centrally located.

$ Another dependable home-stay option in Hana is **Aina's Hana Maui Vacation Rentals** (4176 Hana Hwy.; ☎ 800/991-2422 or 808/248-8087; www.maui-hana.com). The Ainas, a Hawaiian family, have a small building beside their home with three basic vacation rentals in it: two rooms with microwaves and coffeemakers for $85, and one with a kitchen for $95. The rates include tax and two people, with $20 per extra head. This is a simple, comfortable place with dogs and kids around, on the outskirts of town, in as much as Hana has outskirts of town.

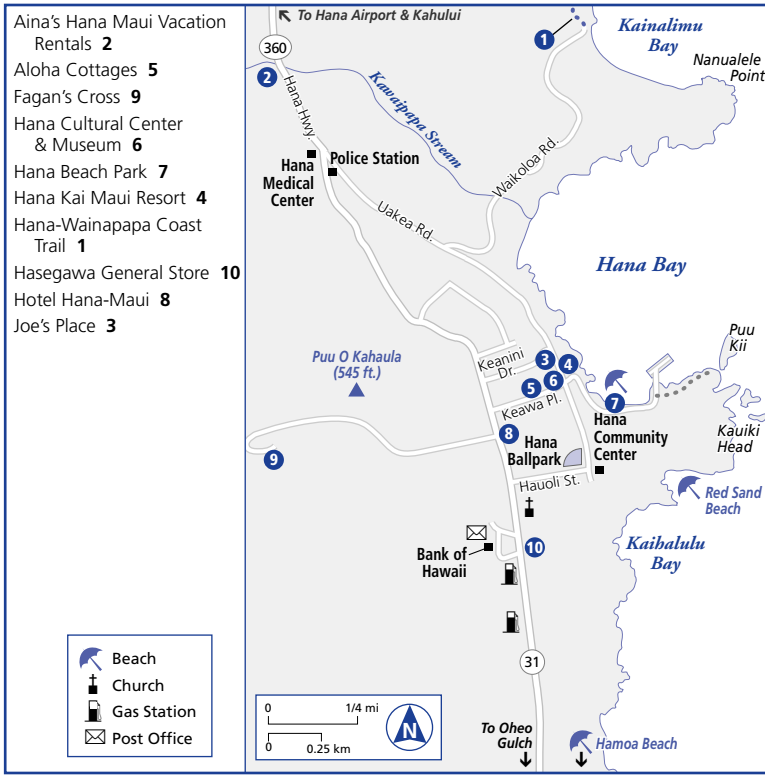
$$–$$$ Across the street from Joe's Place (see above), you'll find the **Hana Kai Maui Resort** ✯ (1533 Uakea Rd. Hana; ☎ 800/346-2772 or 808/248-8426; www.hanakai.com), an attractive, three-story condo complex that feels like a fine motel, nestled against a rocky black-sand beach where the local surfer kids shred the wild shore break. Studios start at $125 and one-bedrooms start at $145, with discounts for longer stays. None of the simple, peaceful rooms have televisions, but all have lanais and are within earshot of the crashing waves. This is a romantic place in a beautiful setting, great for couples.

$$$$ **Hotel Hana-Maui** ✯✯✯ (5031 Hana Hwy.; ☎ 800/321-4262 or 808/248-8211; www.hotelhanamaui.com) is where billionaires come to unwind. Elegant, understated, and with an exquisite sense of place, this hotel is worth considering as a splurge for the most special of occasions. All guests stay in private cottages, the smallest of which are a whopping 700 square feet, with a wet bar and sitting room (these go for about $395/night). Hardwood floors and pretty quilts on the beds add to the ambience. A full resort, there are daily activities included in the cost from hula lessons to medicinal-plant walking tours to tennis and croquet. On the grounds are three excellent restaurants, a full-service spa, and a fitness room. This is a place I'd want to spend at least a night in after, say, saving money by camping in the bush for 2 weeks.

CENTRAL MAUI: KAHULUI & WAILUKU

The big urban area comprising Kahului and Wailuku, twin workaday cities where most flights land and where a quarter of the island's population resides, isn't Maui's foremost vacation destination, but it does provide some cheap places to stay.

$ In Wailuku, over the bridge separating it from Kahului, you'll find two supercheap hostels. The **Northshore Hostel** (2080 W. Vineyard St.; ☎ 866/946-7835 or 808/986-8095; www.northshorehostel.com) occupies the top floor of a creaky old building on a lonely downtown block, across from a free public parking lot. You can get a bed here in a four-bunk dorm room for $25 a night. Private rooms with shared bathrooms run from $50 for singles to $90 for triples. This place is quiet, stark, and a little drab. But for those accustomed to hostels, and who are looking to save on accommodations, it does fine. The free weekend tours



to the summit of Haleakala and to the far-flung little town of Hana make an already good deal even better.

$ Slightly cheaper and with more free tours, though far more freewheeling and in a worse neighborhood, is **Banana Bungalow Maui Hostel** ✭ (310 N. Market St., Wailuku; 800/846-7835 or 808/244-5090; www.mauihostel.com). A dorm bunk here runs $22 a night, while private rooms with shared bathrooms range from $44 for singles to $66 for triples. Reborn as a hostel after earlier incarnations as a boardinghouse and a brothel, Banana Bungalow has the air of a college dorm, with all the drinking, none of the studying, and more than its share of European and Australian exchange students. You can still get sleep, though, as the hot tub, kitchen, TV, foosball table, and pool table are locked down by 11pm. It's safe enough once you're on the grounds, but coming and going by foot can be off-putting, especially at night. To avoid muggings, drive. There's street parking. Just don't leave anything in your car. For the car-less, there's a shuttle to the airport and beach. There are also free tours to different parts of the island every day of the week—a phenomenal deal considering that such tours with commercial companies cost around $100 per person. Rates at both hostels include tax and you can usually get discounts for longer stays. Both places also require an airline ticket off the island or a foreign passport for check-in.

$$ Business travelers, neighbor-island families, and off-island construction crews have long frequented two aging low-rise hotels in Kahului that sit side by side on the island's only deep-draft harbor. These places are virtually indistinguishable, except that the **Maui Beach Hotel** (170 Kaahumanu Ave.; ☎ Castle Resorts 888/649-3222; www.castleresorts.com/MBH) has a free shuttle to the airport (5 min. away) and lower rack rates, starting at $110. Internet specials are sometimes available. Rooms at the **Maui Seaside Hotel** (100 Kaahumanu Ave.; ☎ 800/560-5552 or 808/877-3311; www.mauiseasidehotel.com), start at $125, though I've seen them online for as low as $88. Check the Seaside's website first, then shop around. If you find a lower rate at another website, Seaside will match it, upgrade the room, let you check in early and check out late, and throw in breakfast for two at its restaurant. If you have a choice of rooms, get one with an even number—it will have a harbor view. Either of these hotels is adequate for a short stay, especially if proximity to the airport matters, but you can do better for the money.

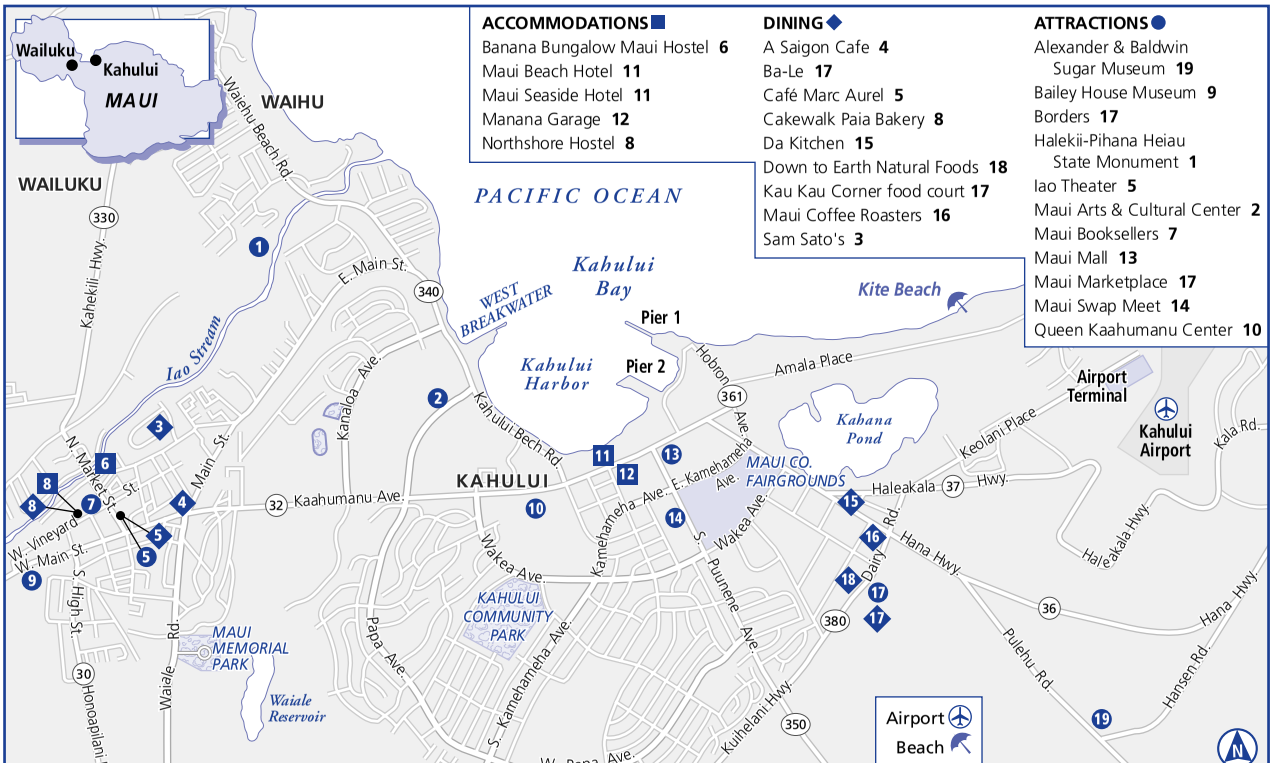
CAMPING

You'll find Maui's very best deal on accommodations at one of the island's most popular visitor attractions, **Haleakala National Park** (☎ 808/572-4459; free with $10 entry fee). The park has two drive-up campgrounds and three wilderness campgrounds where you can stay for **free.** No permits are needed to stay at either the **Hosmer Grove** campground, near the park entrance at 7,000 feet, or at the **Kipahulu campground,** near Oheo Gulch, on Maui's far east side, 10 miles past Hana. You simply drive up, and, if there's room, pitch a tent.

Inside Haleakala Crater, there are two wilderness campsites, the **Pilaku** and **Holua campgrounds.** For these, you need to get a permit from the Park Headquarters Visitor Center, near the park entrance. They're issued on a first-come, first-served basis—so if your heart's set on wilderness camping, come early. In addition to the tent sites, there's a primitive cabin at each campground, plus a third cabin in the crater at **Kapalaoa.** These rent for $75 per night, with guests applying at least 2 months in advance through a lottery system (occasionally there are last-minute cancellations and the cabins are up for grabs—call the park to inquire). Water in the crater must be treated before drinking, and no fires are allowed, so a portable cookstove would come in handy. Also note that weather in the crater can change suddenly—from sunny to torrential rain, or from warm to freezing cold—so pack accordingly.

Stays at all of these places are limited to 3 nights per month. And while the campgrounds themselves are free, there is a $10 park entry fee, which is good for a week.

Once you've exhausted your stay at Haleakala National Park, you can jump to either of the two Maui state parks with campgrounds, where the cost to camp goes up to $5 per night. One campground is high on the slopes of Haleakala, at **Polipoli Spring State Recreation Area,** which is typically sunny in the morning and socked in with clouds in the afternoon, and which has miles of great hiking trails. The other is on the coast at **Wainapanapa State Park,** just outside of Hana. It has a black-sand beach and is surrounded by ancient Hawaiian sites. Permits are needed to camp at either place. To get them, contact the **Division of State Parks** (54 S. High St., Wailuku, HI 96793; ☎ 808/985-8109; www.hawaii.gov/dlnr/dsp). Both campgrounds have cabins, but they're hard to get reservations for, and they're both kind of grungy. If I were you, I'd stick with tent camping here.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Airport
Beach

You can also camp at two county parks: **Kanaha Beach Park** near Kahului, and **Papalaua Wayside Park** on the way to Lahaina. These are the least desirable public campgrounds. Kanaha, which is at a popular windsurfing beach, is under the flight path for Kahului Airport. Papalaua Wayside sits along busy Honoapiilani Highway, between Maalaea and Lahaina, so there's a lot of traffic noise. Both sites book up quickly, and you need to make reservations well in advance. Campsites cost $3 per night, and there's a 3-night maximum per month. Contact **Maui County Parks and Recreation Department** (1580-C Kaahumanu Ave., Wailuku; ☎ 808/661-4685; www.mauimapp.com).

My favorite campground is perched on a bluff above a peninsula covered with taro patches, halfway to Hana. **Camp Keanae** ★★ (13–375 Hana Hwy., between mile markers 11 and 12, Keanae; ☎ 808/248-8355; www.mauiymca.org/campk.htm) has tent sites for $17 per person or $35 per family, and if you haven't got a tent, you can grab one of the bunks in the dormitories for the same price (bring your own bedding). If your tent leaks and you want to curl up in a dry bunk, you can switch—at no charge.

Camp Keanae has a splendid view of the rugged northeast coastline, and a sprawling, rolling grassy area, with all sorts of nooks and crannies where you can pitch a tent away from the wind. Amenities include fire pits, a basketball court with a hardwood floor, and showers. There's also a duplex cottage with two one-bedroom units that sleep up to four apiece, for $125 per night. They include kitchenettes and share a wraparound lanai and gas grill, so one of you can cook while the others direct from their chaise longues. Ordinarily, serenity prevails. But, now and then, a soccer camp or an African dance group or a Taiko drumming festival shows up. And in that case, I wouldn't call it peaceful. Call ahead to check the schedule.

DINING FOR ALL TASTES

Maui has a thriving, competitive restaurant scene that offers something for everyone. From the most exclusive five-star dining rooms to the lowliest roadside lunch wagon, high standards prevail. Here are some of the best options—from splurges to deals, and with many excellent meals in between.

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Average entree price: $ = $9 and less; $$ = $10 to $15; $$$ = $16 to $21; $$$$ = $22 and up

SOUTH MAUI: KIHEI/WAILEA

$ Without a doubt, the best place in south Maui to find a paper plate piled with more food than one person should probably eat all at once, for under $10, is **Da Kitchen** ★ (Rainbow Mall, 2439 S. Kihei Rd., ☎ 808/875-7782; also in Kahului at 425 Koloa St., Kahului, ☎ 808/871-7782). Portions here are so large, two people can generally split a meal and not leave hungry. Local people love the place, and countless visitors have taken their first baby steps here into the high-fat, high-protein, and high-carbohydrate world of Hawaiian food. At Da Kitchen, as with all bona-fide local-style eateries in Hawaii, "salad" means macaroni salad. If you want a salad made with lettuce, you must say "green salad." As if the large servings weren't already large enough, the Kihei location has the Big Braddah Combo ($8.75), which gives you two entrees (choice of teriyaki chicken, teriyaki beef, katsu, and kalua pork). If that's not enough, there's the Sumotori Combo ($9.75), in which you get three. If you have access to a refrigerator, you can buy a Sumotori Combo and live off of it, more or less, for 2 or 3 days. The Kahului location doesn't do combo plates, but it has something Kihei doesn't: child-size portions ($4.75).

$ For a lunch or dinner under $10, more sports on television than anybody can keep up with, and a huge selection of beer, check out **The Sports Page Grill & Bar** (2411 S. Kihei Rd., Kamaole Beach Center; ☎ 808/879-0602). The burgers and sandwiches are good, and the plate lunches hit the spot (but don't waste your time with the sorry green salads). There's one big-screen TV, lots of small ones, pool tables, secondhand smoke, and a friendly neighborhood-pub vibe that makes you want to hang out longer than you probably should in a smoky place.

$–$$ The popular Hapa's nightclub, tucked away in the Lipoa Center shopping plaza on a side street off South Kihei Road, is flanked by two worthwhile Mexican restaurants. To the left, **Amigo's** (41 E. Lipoa St.; ☎ 808/879-9952) serves hot, tasty, cheesy dinners for under $10, and breakfast for under $6. This place does a bustling takeout business, though there are a few tables, too. In the mornings, the huevos rancheros ($6) are especially good. If you're convinced that nothing allays a hangover quite like slow-cooked, spicy *menudo* (traditional Mexican soup), they've got it here on Saturday and Sunday—when it's in high demand. To the right of Hapa's, **Horhitos Mexican Cantina** (☎ 808/891-6394) has higher prices and a better sit-down atmosphere, dark enough for romantic meals and large enough for rowdy gatherings. The tortilla soup (large, $7.95) gets high marks. Oddly enough for a Mexican place, the Caesar salad does, too (large, $7.50).

$–$$ A place guileless enough to name itself **Vietnamese Cuisine** (The Azeka Place I, 1280 S. Kihei Rd.; ☎ 808/875-2088) is hard not to like before you even get inside. Eat here and you'll like it even more. Try the *bahn hoi,* a Vietnamese burrito filled with beef, chicken, shrimp, or pork; wrapped in rice paper; and garnished with basil, mint, cucumber, romaine lettuce, and bean sprouts, along with vermicelli cake noodles, pickled carrots, and daikons ($11). If that seems too light, try one of the "claypot specialties," catfish or—better yet—mahimahi, braised with black-pepper sauce and simmered in the same clay pot it's served in ($11). There's a decent vegetarian menu here, too, and often a full house.

Kihei Tiki Culture

Tiki bars are to Hawaiian culture what a bag of goldfish crackers is to a pod of wild spinner dolphins. One is real. The other isn't even close. Still, it's possible to appreciate both goldfish crackers and wild dolphins for what they're worth. While tiki bars may lack authenticity, they can be fun. The **South Shore Tiki Lounge** (1913 S. Kihei Rd, Kihei Kalama Village; ☎ 808/874-6444; **$–$$**) comes complete with all the trimmings you'd expect: bamboo paneling, flaming torches, a black-velvet Elvis, and genuine puffer-fish lampshades over the bar. It's also got tasty grilled sausage sandwiches ($6), burgers ($8), 16-inch pizzas with thin, crispy New York–style crusts (starting at $15), and, of course, those crazy drinks with the little umbrellas and pineapple spears in them ($7).

$–$$ **Jawz** (1279 S. Kihei Rd., Azeka Shopping Center; ☎ 808/874-TACO) started out as a one of the Makena Beach roadside food trucks, but it grew up and got a lease in a shopping plaza. Now it has walls, windows, tables, a commercial kitchen, and a comprehensive salsa bar where you can heap olives, cilantro, jalapenos, an avocado-and-sour-cream mixture, and all sorts of sauces and salsas onto your ahi, ono, or mahimahi tacos. The basic taco ($6.95 for black beans, $8.95 for mahimahi)—heaped with shredded lettuce, cheese, and a delightful house sauce—brims with potential; what you do with it at the salsa bar determines the mark it will make in this world. If you find yourself at a complete loss for where to begin, I recommend a light treatment with the roasted habanera pepper, pineapple, and carrot salsa. Follow up with a robust overlay of the smoky chipotle-pepper hot sauce and then go with your instincts from there. At the original Jawz, you could eat your tacos along the road as actual surfers blazed past with surfboards strapped to the tops of their cars; here you can watch DVDs of surfing on a big, flat-screen monitor.

$$ For hungry Makena beachgoers and visitors to La Perouse Bay, there's a selection of roadside food vendors along Makena Alanui Road. Just be prepared: They all charge more than you'd expect to pay for roadside food. My favorite is **The Shrimp Trap** (parks near Big Beach's north parking lot), where you can get a small mountain of shrimp scampi on rice, heavy with garlic, for $10. It may not be the best car food, especially if you're the driver, but it is buttery bliss. I appreciate the owner's candor in naming his truck as he did. He considered both The Shrimp King and The Shrimp Master before settling on The Shrimp Trap, reasoning in pidgin English, "I just going trap 'em"—as in the passing motorists. Watching the break lights of car after car go on after whizzing through his invisible garlicky snare, I'd say his plan unfolded perfectly.

$$–$$$ I have to admit, I found something a little unseemly at first about an ocean aquarium running a seafood restaurant right next door. But that's no reason to overlook the Maui Ocean Center's **Seascape Maalaea Restaurant** kids (192

Gourmet Meals, Two for the Price of One

Raul Bermudez worked as an executive chef at top-end restaurants in Maui's tony resorts for years before bringing his take on Hawaii's regional cuisine down off the mountain and putting it back on the vinyl tablecloths of The People, where it all began. He left the polished crystal and high prices behind, but his deft presentations of blackened ahi ($24), pan-seared opakapaka ($23), and macadamia-nut-crusted onaga ($24) stuck with him. At his restaurant, **Bermudez's Big Wave Café** ★★★ (1215 S. Kihei Rd., at the Longs Drugs Kihei Center; ☎ 808/891-8688; **$$–$$$$**), you can sit outdoors under broad awnings and watch the traffic go by, or indoors under a vaulted ceiling and watch surf videos. Go between 5 and 6pm for the early-bird special, when you can get two dinners for the price of one.

Maalaea Rd., Maalaea Harbor Village; ☎ 808/270-7403; lunch only, 11am–3:30pm). It has a good selection of reasonably priced pastas, seafood entrees, and seafood pastas, plus a kids' menu and prices lower than other joints on the harbor, such as Buzz's Wharf and The Waterfront (see below). Seascape's *en plein air* dining room opens only for lunch, and the seafood salad ($16) seems as well stocked as the 750,000-gallon main tank next door. If you question the propriety of an aquarium getting into the seafood business, the waitstaff will tell you that they don't serve anything on the "avoid list" of the Monterey Bay Aquarium, which eschews threatened species and seafood caught in environmentally unsound ways. Furthermore, they don't cook anything raised next door.

$$–$$$ For family-style Italian, try **Bada Bing** kids (1945 S. Kihei Rd.; ☎ 808/871-0188), a Frank Sinatra–themed pasta place that boasts it's "Home of the $10 Wine List." The signature entree is "One Big Meatball," a comically portioned half-pound whopper in marinara sauce for $10. If that's too much for you, the steaks, pastas, burgers, and submarine sandwiches come in more manageable sizes.

$$–$$$ After following the Grateful Dead for several years, the owners of **Stella Blues Cafe** (1279 S. Kihei Rd.; Azeka Mauka; ☎ 808/874-3779) settled on Maui and opened up a restaurant in Kihei, adorning the walls with Grateful Dead memorabilia and the menu with references that might go over the heads of all but true Deadheads (Sunshine Daydream Seafood Stew, $22; Mama Tried Meatloaf, $17). They've got creative food, a cheerful staff, pizzas, pastas, steaks, vegetarian entrees, and decorative green concrete countertops at the lively bar. This is the only place in Kihei where you can get a tofu scramble in the morning ($8.95). The veggie lasagna ($16) in the evening is delicious.

$$$–$$$$ Apart from the fantastic harborside location in which it's served—and the outstanding prawns—don't expect much more than standard steak-and-seafood fare at **Buzz's Wharf** (Maalaea Harbor; ☎ 808/244-5426). The prawns come from a saltwater prawn farm in faraway New Caledonia, which is owned by the family that owns the restaurant. Don't come here for dinner, come for an

A Hidden Gem Worthy of a Splurge

The best place for seafood in Maalaea—and one of the best on Maui—is **The Waterfront** ★★★ (50 Hauoli St., Maalaea, in the Milowai Condominium; ☎ 808/244-9028; **$$$–$$$$**), an obscure, hard-to-find place with a fabulous ocean view. Six catches-of-the-day typically appear on the menu, and they can be matched with any of nine preparations. If you blow it—by, say, trying to broil the opakapaka, a light and flaky Hawaiian snapper that doesn't respond well to such harsh treatment—the waitstaff will tactfully point out that the opakapaka does especially well "en Bastille," in which the chef somehow coaxes angel-hair ribbons of pasta from a potato, with which he "imprisons" the fish before sautéing it, baking it, then serving it with scallions, mushrooms, tomatoes, and meunière sauce. You'd never know The Waterfront was here unless you were tipped off, hidden away in the bottom of a condo as it is. This is a worthwhile splurge, with a great sunset view if you get here in time.

afternoon beer and the Coconut Panko Fried Shrimp ($12)—which isn't really a shrimp dish; all of the shrimp dishes here actually feature prawns. If you do decide to have dinner, try the sweet Tahitian prawns, in which you get a half-dozen prawns baked in dry vermouth, dill, and a tiny bit of Parmesan ($28). They come out tasting like little lobsters.

$$–$$$$ A golf-course restaurant in an exclusive resort isn't necessarily where you'd expect to find the highest concentration of Irish in the North Pacific. Yet there they are, on student visas, serving shepherd's pies, pouring Guinness stouts, and scrubbing the corn beef and cabbage off the bottoms of pans. Irish-run and -owned **Mulligan's on the Blue** (100 Kaukahi St., on the Wailea Blue golf course; ☎ 808/874-1131; www.mulligansontheblue.com) has an ocean view, live music every night, and delightfully low prices compared to the other restaurants in tony Wailea. Thursday and Friday nights are Wailea Nights, which means you can get a three-course meal with wine—along with storytelling and slack-key guitar played by two acclaimed local musicians—for $50. Otherwise, try the corned beef and Kula cabbage ($16). Or perhaps the Guinness-marinated rack of lamb, with Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, braised Kula cabbage, and onion with a red-wine reduction ($23). If you're still hungry, the Bailey's Irish Cream cheesecake ($6) will take care of that.

$$$–$$$$ The early-bird special at **Sansei Seafood Restaurant and Sushi Bar** ★ (1881 S. Kihei Rd., Kihei Town Center; ☎ 808/879-0004) slices 25% off all dinners and sushi from 5:30 to 6pm Tuesday through Saturday, and 50% off dinners and sushi from 5 to 6pm Sunday and Monday. The late-night special is even better—50% off sushi and appetizers from 10pm to 1am Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. The late-night specials coincide with laser karaoke night, which is way more fun than you'd expect. The entrees here reflect a firm Japanese influence over Pacific Rim cuisine. Try the beef tenderloin encrusted with mild chili-porcini mushrooms and served with garlic mashed potatoes in a shiitake cabernet

Mark Ellman's Three Fine Restaurants

Chef Mark Ellman, one of a dozen chefs responsible for originally creating the category of Hawaii Regional Cuisine, has moved on to become Maui's patron saint of practical eaters. He tries to use organic, whole-grain locally produced ingredients as much as possible. First he opened **Maui Tacos** (multiple locations: Lahaina Sq., Lahaina, ☎ 808/661-8883; Kamaole Beach Center, Kihei, ☎ 808/8795005; Napili Plaza, Napili, ☎ 808/665-0222; Kaahumanu Center, Kahului, ☎ 808/871-7726; **$**), which filled a gaping hole on Maui for healthy Mexican food not drowned in cheese. The fish tacos for $4 are the thing to order. You fix them up to your liking at the condiment bar.

Next, Ellman opened **Penne Pasta** ★★★ (180 Dickenson St., near Front St.; ☎ 808/661-6633; **$$**), where you can get heaping plates of delicious pasta for under $10, and a surprising selection of reasonably priced wine and beer, all in a pleasant, pastel-colored space. When you order at the counter, consider trying the linguine with clam sauce ($9.95) or the linguine pesto ($7.25). Upgrade either one with grilled ahi for an extra $3.95. Penne Pasta also has weekly specials, like the lamb *osso buco* on Wednesday and lasagna on Thursday. Pasta portions are generous here. If you aren't famished, you can order a single plate and split it with someone else—it might fill you both up.

Most recently, Ellman opened **Mala—An Ocean Tavern** (1307 Front St., north of town, across from the Cannery Mall; ☎ 808/667-9394; **$–$$$**), a superb tapas bar with a small, oceanfront lanai where tiki torches carry the blazing hues of the Lahaina sunset into the night. So many tiki torches ring the lanai, it looks like you're dining under a broiler. Portions are designed for two to four people, and range in price from $2 for marinated olives to $20 for flatiron steak. Most items are around $13.

demiglaze ($23). The sushi is traditional sushi, except for the house specials, such as the mango crab-salad handroll ($7.95), made with mangoes, blue crab, Kula greens, and a delicious spicy Thai vinaigrette. There are two Sansei restaurants on Maui (and one on Oahu). The Kihei location, a central nightlife hub, is always packed, and reservations are *strongly* advised. The Kapalua location (The Shops at Kapalua; 115 Bay Dr.; Kapalua; ☎ 808/669-6286) is a little mellower. The Kapalua late-night specials occur from 10pm to 1am Thursday and Friday; the early-bird specials are the same as Kihei's.

WEST MAUI

$ A block off of Lahaina's busy Front Street, don't miss an easily overlooked place called **Royal Seafood Chinese Kitchen** (888 Wainee St., at corner of Papalaua, kitty-corner from Hilo Hatties; ☎ 808/661-9955). This humble little

A Fine-Dining Splurge with a Half-Price Option

David Paul's Lahaina Grill ★★★ Kids (127 Lahainaluna Rd, Lahaina; ☎ 808/667-5117; www.lahainagrill.com; **$$$$**) is at the apex of Maui's fine-dining world. Its impeccably attuned waitstaff, soft warm lighting, enormous desert-toned paintings, and an exquisite New American menu collaborate beneath the pressed-tin ceilings of a historic Lahaina building to form a restaurant that consistently wins accolades from leading gourmet magazines. In fact, for 12 years in a row, the readers of *Honolulu Magazine* voted Lahaina Grill the best restaurant on Maui. "The Kalua duck ($29) was so rich and smooth that if I could walk on water, I'd walk to Lahaina to eat it again," wrote the editor, an estimable gourmand. Dinner here is a splurge, to be sure, but with the recent addition of a demi-menu, you can now sit at the bar and enjoy half portions for about half the price. Try the exquisite Kona coffee–roasted rack of lamb, with a light coffee-cabernet demiglaze ($39; or demi-menu $20), or the outstanding tequila shrimp and firecracker rice, with Southwestern herbs and spices and butter flavored with tequila ($33; or demi-menu $19). There's also a kids' menu with, among other things, beef kabobs ($12). Reservations are recommended.

Chinese restaurant is worth noticing because its dishes are more than satisfactory and priced mostly under $10. An extensive menu covers all the bases—egg fu young ($7.25), beef broccoli ($7.95), and General Tso's chicken ($8.95)—but what really stands out is the all-you-can-eat lunch buffet for $7.55.

$$ If you have to wait in line for breakfast, it's nice to have whales to watch. **The Gazebo** (5315 L. Honoapiilani Rd., at Napili Shores; ☎ 808/669-5621) is so popular among the condo dwellers of the Napili area that you're almost guaranteed a wait in line, at least for breakfast, but it's worth it. With sweeping views across the channels between Maui, Molokai, and Lanai, you can't help but spot whales frolicking offshore in the winter, whether you're in line or seated inside. The Gazebo's open for breakfast and lunch only, and everything's under $10. Even outside of whale season, the macadamia-nut pancakes are worth some patience.

$$ Whenever I have a chance to talk to restaurant people on Maui, I ask where they like to eat. More often than not, they mention **Thai Chef** ★★★ (Old Lahaina Center, 880 Front St.; ☎ 808/667-2814). When I went to see what the fuss was about, three grinning diners who were leaving stopped me at the door, congratulated me on my fine taste in restaurants, raved about the meal they had just had, and strongly recommended the Thai beef steak. They were right—exquisitely thin slices of beef grilled with a tangy Thai sauce and sprinkled with sesame seeds and green onions ($9.95) is a dish worth raving about. But everything else here is delicious, too—the pad Thai, pan-fried with sweet peanut sauce ($9.95); the Evil Prince, with chicken, bamboo shoots, basil, coconut milk, and red curry, served over shredded cabbage ($9.95); the Pineapple Fried Rice with shrimp, egg, onion, peas, carrots, and pineapple ($9.95); and the garlic squid, with carrots, onions,

Flea Market Maui-Style

If you're staying in one of Maui's many condos, you can stock your kitchen with fresh island-grown produce from the farmers market at the **Maui Swap Meet** (S. Puunene Ave., next to the Kahului Post Office; ☎ 808/877-3100; 7am–noon; admission 50¢) every Saturday. Fruits and vegetables are delightfully inexpensive. For $10 to $15, you can load up on enough mangoes, papayas, sweet corn, string beans, limes, sweet potatoes, spinach, lettuce, and so forth to last for quite some time. Most fun, if you get hungry while shopping, there are plenty of food vendors from which to snack.

and bell peppers ($11). And, helping to keep the tab down, it's BYOB (beer and wine are okay; no corkage fee). If my dining companion and I hadn't stayed passed closing, we too would have congratulated anyone we met on their way in on their fine taste in restaurants.

$$–$$$$ North of Lahaina, the **Fish & Game Brewing Co. & Rotisserie** (4405 Honoapiilani Hwy., Kahana Gateway Center; ☎ 808/669-3474; www.mauibrewingco.com) is a microbrewery with a dimly lit, cool, sports-bar interior. It offers six regular beers on tap and a rotating roster of seasonal picks. Try the Double Overhead IPA if it's on tap: It's smooth, hoppy, and strong, and its name plays off both its 4-month fermentation process (rather than the normal 2 months) and a system surfers use to measure wave heights. Although it's a rotisserie—with chicken, ribs, and prime rib roasted over a kiawe-wood fire—they also manage to produce a credible veggie lasagna ($18). Burgers are cheaper ($12).

KAHULUI/WAILUKU

$ The best place in Wailuku to drink coffee in the morning is also the best place to drink wine in the evening: **Café Marc Aurel** (28 N. Market St., Wailuku; ☎ 808/244-0852). Along with the coffee, you'll find delicious bagels and pastries. With wine, you can enjoy gourmet cheeses, desserts, live music, poetry readings, and belly dancing (p. 334). Between the hours of coffee and wine, 8-inch cheese pizzas, bagels, and other things are served for lunch. In neighboring Kahului, in addition to the omnipresent **Starbucks Coffee** (multiple locations), you'll find **Maui Coffee Roasters** (444 Hana Hwy.; ☎ 808/877-2877). It's a nice place to enjoy a fresh pastry or bagel, the newspaper, and the euphoric aroma of roasting coffee. They roast and blend Kona coffee here with beans from around the world. Be sure to pay homage at the shrine for Our Lady of the Eternal Double Latte by the restrooms.

$ Maui's most beloved noodle house, **Sam Sato's** (1750 Wili Pa Loop; ☎ 808/244-7124) is a great place to go for a cheap breakfast and lunches of saimin, chow fun, or dry noodles (everything's under $10). If the noodles aren't speaking to you, you can get barbecued meat sticks, served with two scoops of rice and macaroni salad—the ubiquitous local side dish. For an exotic dessert, try the *manju,* a flaky orbed pastry filled with sweetened lima and adzuki beans. It tastes better than it sounds. Just breakfast and lunch here; the doors close at 2pm.

$ Directly across the highway from Down to Earth, at the **Maui Marketplace,** you'll find the **Kau Kau Corner Food Court** (270 Dairy Rd.; ☎ 808/877-2400) with a host of cheap, good places to eat. My favorite is **Ba-Le** (also at Lahaina Cannery Mall; ☎ 808/661-5566), where Vietnam's French colonial influence merges with the American fast-food experience, colored by Hawaii Regional Cuisine. Noodles stand side by side with baguettes on Ba-Le's menu. Tofu and lettuce on a croissant may not sound very exciting, but Ba-Le's croissant vegetable sandwich quickly endears itself to you. Better yet, it costs just $3.75. For dessert, try the taro tapioca pudding ($1.60). Weird, but delicious.

$–$$ For picnic fixings or a light lunch, **Down to Earth Natural Foods** (305 Dairy Rd., Kahului; ☎ 808/877-2661) is the best bet in Kahului. You can buy healthy sandwiches and wraps, soups, and smoothies; or choose from the $7-per-pound salad-and-hot-food bar.

$–$$ A Saigon Cafe ★★★ (1972 Main St., Wailuku, just over the bridge from Kahului; ☎ 808/243-9560) is another great Vietnamese place, and one without Ba-Le's shopping-mall ambience. No signage announces its existence, but the steady stream of customers coming and going tips you off. Follow them inside and you'll find a place bustling as waiters whisk trays with heaps of noodles, crispy shrimp, and baked chicken from the kitchen to tables and booths filled with regulars who know they're in for something good. When not harried, the Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian waitstaff can be hilarious. Our waiter, sporting a deluxe Elvis pompadour, plucked a cellphone off our table and launched into a mock wrong-number conversation. You can't go wrong with anything on the menu here, but for starters, try the *goi du du* ($7.95), green papaya salad with sweet-and-sour garlic dressing.

THE NORTH SHORE: PAIA

$ It's no surprise that funky Paia, the center of health consciousness and body culture, has the best health-food store on the island, **Mana Foods** ★★ (46 Baldwin Ave.; ☎ 808/579-8078). You can stock up on whole-grain, organic, locally grown everything here. You'll also find the island's best hot bar, salad bar, and deli in the back ($7 per pound for both hot and cold bar). If you're looking

A Splurge with Dinner Specials

For Latin American fare with Pacific overtones, try the **Manana Garage** (33 Lono Ave., Kahului; ☎ 808/873-0220; **$$$–$$$$**). Although this place is on the expensive side, it has great specials that change monthly (when I was here, they were offering 50% off all entrees between 5 and 6pm), so you shouldn't rule it out because it's got four dollar signs. Try the citrus-jalapeno glazed salmon with black-bean sauce ($20), or the fresh-fish chimichanga with wasabi sour cream and roasted tomatillo sauce ($18). There's live Latin music on Friday from 6 to 9pm, and $3 margarita specials on Thursday.

A Seafood Splurge to Remember

If you're looking for a unique-to-Maui, blow-out-your-budget, unforgettable tropical splurge, make dinner reservations at **Mama's Fish House** ★★★ (799 Poho Place, just east of Paia; ☎ 808/579-8488; www.mamasfishhouse.com; **$$$$**). Nestled in a cozy white-sand cove behind a rustling palm grove, Mama's is imbued with an elegant yet casual South Seas castaway vibe that's so hokey it's chic. The executive chef, Perry Bateman, is a local who, as a teenager, began working in the salad pantry here and rose to the top of what's widely regarded as one of the best seafood restaurants in Hawaii. As inspiring as his career path is, his work with roasted kukui nut, paholo fern, organic Maui veggies, and superfresh seafood is even more so. Mama's gets its fish directly from a small bunch of local fishermen, who put their boats in at nearby Maliko Bay and pull up to Mama's back door with their fresh catch on their way home. The menu gives them credit. I was sorely tempted by the ahi, caught by Kris Sakamoto in the Alenuihaha Channel near the Big Island, seared with pepper, and then served with a mushroom brandy sauce ($36). Then I tilted toward the ono, caught by Harry Furomoto while trolling near Kahoolawe, and served with caramelized Maui onion and Olinda avocado ($34). In the end, I chose the mahimahi, baked in a macadamia-nut crust, stuffed with lobster, crab, and onion ($44), and caught by Amando Baula along Maui's north shore, somewhere outside the window.

to load the rental car up on snacks, this is the place to do it. And if you're shopping for a fancier occasion (maybe a special picnic), you'll also find gourmet chocolates, gourmet cheeses, and intriguing crackers.

$ The **Cakewalk Paia Bakery** (100 Baldwin Ave.; ☎ 808/579-8770) does a bustling morning business in coffee and better-than-ordinary pastries and muffins (I got hooked on the carrot-orange muffins). It's got a postage-stamp of a kitchen, and a counter pressed up so close to the door that it practically bounces you back onto the sidewalk when you walk in. But, with a little determination, you can squeeze onto one of the stools by the window to sip coffee, enjoy a muffin, and watch the glorious Paia morning.

$–$$ You know that the places where local cops eat in the morning are good bets for breakfast, and Paia cops like **Charley's Restaurant** (142 Hana Hwy., Paia; ☎ 808/579-9453). So do other folks—including windsurfers, celebrities, Hana-bound tourists, and just about everybody else in town. Try the eggs Benedict ($9.50) or better yet, the ono Benedict ($12). Another good choice is the enormous single buttermilk pancake ($3.75), which overlaps the edges of its plate and has a diameter nearly as large as Willie Nelson's gold records, which you'll find hanging on the wall of the bar in the back. Willie lives on the north shore, and this is one of his haunts, not to mention a great place for north-shore nightlife. Lunches feature burgers, calzones, and pizza, while dinners include grilled steak and fish. But breakfast is the best.

$–$$ Café Des Ami (42 Baldwin Ave.; ☎ 808/579-6323) is a bright, laid-back hole in the wall specializing in the unusual combination of crepes and curries. Try the avocado crepe with apple and black pepper ($8.50), or go for the curried mahimahi with tomato, yogurt, and cilantro ($15). Get a big cup of chamomile tea with either and prepare to feel happy and healthy.

$–$$ On a corner at Paia's main intersection, the **Paia Fishmarket** (100 Hana Hwy., corner of Baldwin Ave; ☎ 808/579-8030) serves excellent, affordable seafood that includes a single filling fish taco ($8.95) and an even more filling seafood pasta in cream sauce ($16). The kitchen knows how to do fish and chips, too, for $15. Order at the counter, then try to find a seat at the usually crowded family-style tables where everybody eats together. This is, by the way, an actual fish market.

WHY YOU'RE HERE: MAUI'S BEACHES

The problem with Maui's beaches is that there's too many of them, and they're so beautiful and varied that it's nearly impossible to know where to begin. You can enjoy fine white-sand concourses stretching for miles along aquamarine waters; sheltered golden crescents nestled between rocky points; steep pockets of black sand plunging into the cobalt blue sea; salt-and-pepper piles of sun-bleached coral rubble and jet-black lava rock, tumbled smooth in the shore break; and one deeply hued red-sand beach nourished by an eroding volcanic cinder cone.

You'll find beaches with parking lots, restrooms, and showers, and beaches where you're on your own for those things; beaches with great swimming and beaches where the reef will shred your feet; beaches for good surfers, and beaches for bad ones; beaches for bodysurfers, skim boarders, sailboarders, and kiteboarders, and beaches that seem made for nothing but sunbathing; beaches for outrigger canoe teams, and beaches for launching rented kayaks; beaches where snorkelers marvel at all the fish, and beaches where their own feet might be the only thing they see with fins; beaches where beach attire is the norm, and beaches where offing it is; beaches with pavement along the sand, and a particular unmarked beach at the end of a crumbling cliff-side trail so perilous it forces you to weigh its risks against your desire to get to the beach.

We'll begin where Maui's paved coastal highway ends and where contact between Maui's Native Hawaiian population and the Western world began, at La Perouse Bay. Then we'll move clockwise along the island's 120-mile coastline, pointing out the very best beaches along the way.

SOUTH MAUI

You won't find soft sand or good swimming at **La Perouse Bay** ★, but you will find a fantastic place to snorkel, dive, and kayak—if the seas are calm. When the south swells hit, a couple of narly surf spots light up, and it's fun to lounge on the heaps of smooth coral and lava rock near the point, watching the action. (***Beware:*** The waves here are for experienced surfers only.)

In 1786, French navigator Jean Francois de Galaup de La Perouse anchored his two frigates in this bay and introduced himself to the villagers of Keoneoio, becoming the first known Westerner to visit Maui. Extensive remnants of Keoneoio can still be found (p. 281), and the 15-minute hike to the point passes

house foundations and walls, a canoe *hale,* and a *heiau,* as well as several small pocket beaches that feel private and wild. This is one of Maui's four marine reserves, and it's forbidden to take anything but pictures and memories. It's also raw, undeveloped land, so bring drinking water.

About 2½ miles north of La Perouse Bay is the 165-acre **Makena State Park,** which has three beaches that bear more than three names. **Big Beach** ★★★ is a broad expanse of fine white sand that stretches nearly a mile along turquoise and azure waters. The sea remains calm here most of the time, but it occasionally kicks up a mean shore break, to the delight of bodysurfers. Like La Perouse Bay, Big Beach is part of the last undeveloped stretch of south Maui. Its two parking lots—one at either end—have portable toilets but no running water. ***Important:*** It's very hot and dry here, so remember to bring something to drink.

Although Big Beach is one of the most popular beaches on the island, it can handle a huge crowd without feeling crowded. The parking lots are another matter, and when they fill up, people park along the road between them and cut to the beach through the kiawe forest (taking care not to puncture their feet on the thorns). The Hawaiian name for Big Beach is **Oneloa,** meaning "long sand," a name this beach shares with an Oneloa Beach in West Maui. Big Beach is also commonly called **Makena Beach,** a name it shares with two other Makena beaches north of here. **Big Makena** is yet another name, and I think a good one. Of all the food vendors who park their rigs along the road, The Shrimp Trap (p. 261) is my favorite.

The lava-rock promontory at Big Beach's north end separates it from **Little Beach** ★★★ (for the best access, park in Big Beach's north parking lot). Scale the rocks and you'll find a secluded sandy cove, as well as naked people, usually lots of them. Little Beach is Maui's foremost nude beach. It has fine swimming, occasional bodysurfing, good snorkeling, and precious little shade. On Sunday, as the sun descends upon the horizon, Little Beach's pagan heart beats to the accompaniment of a drum circle, fire spinners, and a crowd of chanting, twirling, patchouli-burning, and thoroughly tanned old hippies and nouveau tribalists. The authorities generally turn a blind eye to the nudity, which isn't legal, but Makena State Park closes at 9pm, and that's strictly enforced.

Little Beach is often referred to as **Little Makena,** and sometimes as **Pu'u Olai Beach** in honor of the 360-foot-tall cinder cone at its north end. On the other side of towering Pu'u Olai, and right at its base, lies the third beach in the Makena State Park trio, black-sand **Oneuli Beach.** It's the smallest and the least visited of the three. The swimming isn't so hot, but its bay is filled with coral, the snorkeling is great, and you can often see turtles, as well as rays and sometimes small sharks—if they're something you care to go looking for. It's also easy to launch kayaks here. The sand is kind of a muddy black, but still black enough to burn your bare feet under the scorching sun. ***Remember:*** Bring drinking water and flip-flops.

A short snorkel trip north of Oneuli Beach brings you to a broad, mellow strip of white sand called **Maluaka Beach** ★. It fronts the Maui Prince Hotel—a ritzy Japanese-built place and the sole hotel in the exclusive Makena resort. Maluaka has good swimming along its gently sloping sandy shore, lots of fish and turtles among the rocks, coral on each side, and a great shade tree hanging over its southern end. Commercial dive boats anchor offshore for the turtle-watching. Some come to dive the World War II–era U.S. Army halftrack and tank permanently parked on the bottom at around 60 feet.

Further north the extravagant hotels and plush condominiums of Wailea Resort share a string of five golden crescent beaches separated by rocky points. Some of these beaches seem like the private domains of the hotels, but they're not. In Hawaii, the public has the right to any beach. A 1½-mile coastal trail links the Wailea beaches and offers a nice stroll through the resort. **Polo Beach** sits at the south end of the trail, backed by low sand dunes, a high-rise condominium, and the misplaced Moorish architecture of the Kea Lani hotel (turrets, cupolas, and all). The beach offers good swimming most of the time, plus tide pools at the south end, during low tide, at any rate, and good snorkeling on the points. You can snorkel around the north point to the broader, **Wailea Beach,** swarming with guests from the Four Seasons and the Grand Wailea hotels encamped in their hooded beach chairs like half-naked pioneers in miniature Conestoga wagons. It has great swimming and occasional bodysurfing, but not the best snorkeling.

Next are the **Ulua** and **Mokapu beaches,** conjoined twins connected at a stubby rocky point. The point offers great snorkeling and is a popular spot for shore diving. The Wailea Marriott overlooks Ulua, and the Renaissance Wailea Beach Resort stands behind Mokapu. The twin beaches share a public parking lot behind the point, along with restrooms and showers. The coastal trail ends at **Keawakapu Beach** ★★, a long, beautiful, and largely ignored beach fronting luxury condos and some very expensive homes. The resort crowd tends to congregate on the first four beaches (or it sticks around the swimming pools and never makes it to the beach at all), leaving Keawakapu Beach relatively unpopulated. I love playing here in the small waves and then stretching out on the sand to dry in the sun, staring across the windy channel at the offshore islands of Molokini and Kahoolawe framed between my knees.

A more democratic group of beaches lies further up the coast, at the south end of sprawling Kihei. This trio of Roman-numeraled county beach parks, **Kamaole I, Kamaole II,** and **Kamaole III,** draws multitudes of locals and visitors. As with the Wailea beaches, rocky points separate the three Kams, as they're called. All have showers, restrooms, lifeguards, and barbecues. Kam I has beach volleyball. Kam I and II have bodysurfing. Kam III has the most parking, the biggest grassy area, a playground, and something about it that bocce ball players can't resist. Kamaole literally means "without children," which is funny, since kids are everywhere.

North of Kihei, between town and the Maalaea Small Boat Harbor, lies a narrow, undeveloped 3-mile stretch of sand called **Sugar Beach** (pull off anywhere along North Kihei Rd. between Maalaea and Kihei). It's a nice place for long walks or jogs, picnics, fishing, or just staring out to sea, but the swimming isn't particularly good. Sugar Beach parallels the highway and lies adjacent to the Kealia Pond National Wildlife Refuge (p. 289), which, during times of drought, reeks like only dried-out wetlands can. The afternoon winds can blow a gale here, sandblasting beachgoers, but doing little during dry spells to relieve the stench. Kiawe trees, with their sharp thorns, dominate the vegetation line.

And yet, in spite of these negatives, Sugar Beach has a tantalizing, almost hypnotic appeal—even when witnessed from an automobile speeding along North Kihei Road. This is one of the few nesting sites in Hawaii of the rare hawksbill sea turtle, and the fencing you'll see along the highway was put up to prevent hawksbill roadkill.

WEST MAUI

Drive around Papawai Point, past the rugged, dry cliffs known as Pali A'alaalaua, and after popping out of the only tunnel on the island, you'll come to a long stretch of classic Hawaiian beaches that runs for 7 miles along Honoapiilani Highway—all the way to Lahaina. You can pull off the road almost anywhere along here and find a nice place to cool your heels, if not actually swim. Coral flourishes near shore, making for good snorkeling and creating so many surf breaks that the whole area has become known as Thousand Peaks. To find the beginners' surf spots, just look for the breaks where tourists are on long boards. They don't look like the other surfers, so they should be easy to spot. One of the best snorkel grounds is called **Coral Gardens** (at the first unpaved pullout after the tunnel, between mile markers 10 and 11), a fertile patch of reef abounding in fish, eels, and turtles. Of the four roadside beach parks you'll pass, the nicest is **Launiopoko Beach Park** (near mile marker 18), which provides shade, showers, restrooms, plenty of parking, a broad grassy area, picnic tables, barbecues, a wading pond for children, and nice surfable waves, although not much sand.

About halfway to Lahaina, before you reach Launiopoko, the highway briefly recedes from the sea as you pass through the tiny community of Olowalu. At **Olowalu Beach** (turn on the dirt road across from the French restaurant, near mile marker 15), you'll find outstanding snorkeling when the ocean is calm. Check out the "Turtle Cleaning Station," a spot where turtles congregate to have a small hungry fish called a cleaner wrasse nibble algae from their shells, about 225 feet offshore. When a swell is running, you'll find outstanding surfing, but it's for expert surfers only. And, all year long, you'll find signs that say: WARNING. SHARKS MAY BE PRESENT. SHARK BITES HAVE OCCURRED IN THIS AREA. They were posted in 2002 following the third shark attack here in 12 years, one of them fatal. Even if you're not inclined to go in the water, Olowalu is worth a stop. It has the remains of an old sugar mill to explore, ancient petroglyphs nearby, and quiet places to sit in the shade. Look for dorsal fins, and brood on Olowalu's history of blood in the water. In addition to the shark attacks, this was the site of an infamous massacre in 1790, in which an American merchant ship, to avenge the death of a sailor, opened fire on several hundred Hawaiians who paddled out in canoes to trade.

Along the Lahaina shoreline, you'll find a small boat harbor, a seawall, and plenty of beachfront with near-shore reefs that can lacerate your toes. For a better place to take a dip, head north of town to **Hanaka'o'o Beach Park.** In addition to gentle swimming waters, it has beach volleyball, a dozen pavilions, and a hard-packed-dirt Japanese cemetery. Outrigger canoe clubs train here in the afternoons, giving Hanaka'o'o its other name, **Canoe Beach.** Just a short walk from the car to the smooth water's edge, this is a good place to launch a kayak.

You can also park here and stroll, or paddle, north to world-renowned **Kaanapali Beach,** which fronts the six grand hotels of the Kaanapali resort. A paved walkway runs from Hanaka'o'o along Kaanapali Beach for more than a mile, past beachside bars, restaurants, and concessionaires offering catamaran rides, parasailing trips, surf lessons, and beach-gear rentals. Kaanapali Beach continues on, but the walkway ends at **Black Rock,** which teems with fish and tourists and has a reputation as one of Maui's best snorkeling spots.

Shark Attack 101

The risk of getting attacked by a shark while on vacation in Hawaii is slim. Millions of people take to the water every year, and sharks, on average, bite just four of them. Victims usually survive. Drownings, on the other hand, take about 60 lives in Hawaii annually. Still, you can further minimize the risk of shark attacks by heeding the advice of the State of Hawaii Shark Task Force (yes, there is such a thing):

- Don't swim alone.
- Avoid swimming at dusk.
- Don't swim with bleeding wounds.
- Avoid murky water.
- Swim in guarded areas.
- Don't wear bright jewelry or high-contrasting colors.
- Refrain from excessive splashing.
- Be alert if turtles and fish are fleeing the area.
- Remove speared fish from the water.
- Don't swim if sharks are known to be present.

The ancient Hawaiians called Black Rock *Pu'u Keka'a* and knew it as a "souls leap," a place where the spirit of a dying person would come to cross into the afterlife. This spot may have once served the ethereal, but the stretch of beach just south of it clearly belongs to the corporeal. Dubbed **"Dig Me Beach"** for its intense concentration of taut, tanned, flaunted flesh, this is a celebrated place to see and be seen. It's less crowded north of Black Rock.

The north section of Kaanapali Beach is sometimes referred to as **Kahekili Beach.** This beach has heaped up accolades over the years, including a 2003 ranking as "America's Best Beach" by "Dr. Beach," aka Stephen Letherman, the beach-ranking coastal expert and professor at Florida International University in Miami, who's dedicated to promoting the balance between environmental quality and recreational use of the nation's beaches. Shortly after the award, strange sea conditions began eroding the sand, taking away America's Best Beach and panicking the hotels. But eventually, the beach returned on its own.

If you don't want to walk up to Kaanapali Beach from Hanaka'o'o Beach Park, try the more convenient parking lot at Whalers Village shopping center, next to The Westin Maui hotel. It has a few free beach parking spots if you know to ask the parking attendant about them; otherwise, you can buy something at the shopping center and get validation, or just pay to park ($2.50 per hour, $20 per day). There's also a small public parking area next to the public path leading to the beach along the north side of the Kaanapali Beach Hotel, but it fills up fast. The fourth option is to park at the quiet, north end of Kaanapali Beach, at **Kahekili Beach Park.**

Near-shore reefs along the 3 miles of coast north of Kaanapali Beach make swimming conditions poor, with a few exceptions. Nonetheless, the beaches are beautiful, great for sunbathing, and well used by the area's profusion of condo dwellers. The swimming situation changes at Napili Bay, at the start of a 3-mile coastline with five of Maui's best beaches on it. It starts with **Napili Beach** ★★★, a perfect, broad crescent of sand that's well protected by two rocky points, with great waters for swimming and gentle waves for frolicking, although every once in a while a big swell finds its way in and roughs things up. Visitors staying in the pricey Napili Kai Beach Resort on the north point, or in the cluster of more affordable low-rise condominiums behind the beach, make up the majority of Napili's beach-going populace. A lively, happy vibe prevails here, with footballs flying, sunscreen flowing, and whole families lying in the sand, letting the waves roll them up and down the beach like logs. There's not much public parking along the access road, Napili Place, but you might get lucky. The Napili Kai Beach Resort has a nice little outdoor bar with $7 mai tais, where you can sit without your shirt or shoes and still get service.

Around the north point lies another perfect crescent of sand, **Kapalua Beach** ★★. It's a bit smaller than Napili Beach, and even better protected from wind and swells. It has more coral and better snorkeling, and it has public restrooms and showers, which Napili Beach lacks. In 1991 this beach won Dr. Beach's very first America's Best Beach award, an honor the beach commemorates with a plaque near the showers. The Kapalua Bay Hotel Resort fronts the beach and supplies it with a steady crowd of sunbathers, swimmers, snorkelers, and kayakers. The hotel offers a convenient place to get an expensive lunch. There's also great whale-watching from the points, and that's free.

If crowds of frolicking families and sunbathers at Napili and Kapalua beaches aren't your thing, you can almost always find some measure of solitude one bay away, at **Oneloa Beach** ★★, aka **Ironwood Beach.** This is the *other* Oneloa Beach, and it's nothing like South Maui's Oneloa Beach. While that Oneloa occupies a flat, dry, undeveloped stretch of coast, this Oneloa sits at the bottom of low cliffs and hills beneath a green golf course and some quiet luxury condominiums. While that Oneloa lives up to the literal meaning of its name, "long sand," this Oneloa really isn't all that long; it's about a half mile. And while that Oneloa attracts hundreds of beachgoers, this Oneloa hardly attracts anybody.

The wind can blow hard here, and during big north swells, the water becomes unsafe. Mostly though, you'll find good swimming and easy bodysurfing, at least at the south end of the beach. At the north end, where the entrance is, you'll find bad swimming but good snorkeling, plus some golf balls in the water. People drawn to this Oneloa are the ones who like having a beach to themselves, and who

Enjoy a Six-Pack at Sunset

Maui County has no open-container law preventing you from drinking in county beach parks. You can crack open a beer or uncork a bottle of wine without fear of getting ticketed. Just be sure you're actually in a county beach park.

Car Break-Ins

Car break-ins are a perennial problem at beaches throughout Hawaii, and Maui's no exception. Rental cars are prime targets. Hiding valuables under the seat, in the visor, or in the trunk will not protect them. The thieves just assume you've done this and break in anyway. The best strategy is to leave the car unlocked with nothing in it.

find something deeply satisfying about building good wind shelters with boogie boards and coolers.

Around the next point is the longest beach with the roughest water in the West Maui beach quartet. **DT Flemming Beach** is a broad beautiful stretch of white sand that's less protected than Kapalua or Napili beaches. When the waves get big, injuries happen—and they usually happen to tourists. When the waters are calm, there's good snorkeling around the rocks to the right. The north end of the beach has a county beach park with showers, restrooms, lifeguards, and picnic tables. The south end has a Ritz-Carlton hotel and an appealing little beach bar and grill with discouraging Ritz-Carlton prices ($12–$19 appetizers, $17 sandwiches, $9 tropical drinks).

Two more beaches round out the offerings of West Maui. First is **Mokulie'a Beach,** aka **Slaughterhouse Beach.** When I initially heard it called Slaughterhouse, all I could think was that surfers named it that in an attempt to minimize crowds through clever branding. But as it turns out, this is cattle country, and an actual slaughterhouse once stood on the cliff, freely dumping its bloody waste on the beach below.

This is a beautiful, wide, sandy beach during the summer. In the winter it gets pounded by big waves, which strip away much of the sand. The waves can take what they like, but for beachgoers, removing anything is prohibited—including fish, shells, sand, or the glittering green olivine crystals that turn up in the sand. This bay, along with Honolua Bay to the north, is within a marine reserve where taking stuff is not allowed. Don't worry though, the cattle dump was gone before that rule was in place.

Around the point, you'll find **Honolua Bay,** one of the best places to snorkel on Maui in the summer, and one of Hawaii's best big-wave surf spots in the winter. When the surf gets really good, even surfers on Oahu's famed North Shore will give up the great waves in their backyard to fly over here and surf Honolua Bay instead. A lively gallery of onlookers gathers on the cliffs above, admiring the good rides and both cringing and snickering at the disastrous ones. Despite the rocky shore, when the surf is flat, the crystal-clear water, the thriving coral, and the marine life here draw plenty of visitors. There are no lifeguards, showers, or restrooms at either Honolua Bay or Slaughterhouse Beach.

THE NORTH SHORE

The best Hawaiian island for windsurfing is Maui, and the Maui beach where you can learn how to do it is **Kanaha Beach Park** kids, a 40-acre county park near Kahului airport with lifeguards, volleyball, canoe clubs, and camping (p. 258).

Many of the island's windsurfing shops conduct classes here (p. 306). The winds are steady and strong, but not too strong, and they blow onshore, so if you completely screw up out there, at least you'll drift in the right direction. A far-offshore reef (on which experienced windsurfers like to jump waves) shelters the inside waters, leaving calm conditions for beginners. It's also shallow here, making it good for young kids. High-flying kiteboarders (it's not uncommon for them to soar 200 ft. above the waves) used to launch from here until the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) clamped down after too many of them violated the no-fly zone around the airport's flight path. Now, through a compromise worked out between the FAA and the Hawaii Kiteboarding Association, kiteboarders launch from Kaa Point, just west of Kahana. The spot has been dubbed, logically enough, **Kite Beach** (from Kanaha, follow Amala Place toward Kahului), and it's the best place to watch this new extreme sport.

Further down Hana Highway, you'll come to the north shore's most popular all-around beach, **H. A. Baldwin Park.** It's a well-used community beach park, near the funky town of Paia, featuring a soccer field, softball backstop, and a big pavilion where a celebration of some sort always seems underway. The beach is long and broad, with plenty of places to get away from the crowd. The bottom drops off quickly, making for good bodysurfing, but the waters can become rough and dangerous. There are lifeguards at the Paia end. It can be windy here, especially in the afternoon, when the strong gusts thwarted my attempts to read the newspaper. The park was named for Harry Baldwin, grandson of the missionary whose Lahaina home has become a museum (p. 282), and whose offspring became predominate members of Maui's sugar aristocracy.

Further east on the Hana Highway, you'll come to **Hookipa Beach Park** ★ (2 miles past Paia), the preeminent sailboarding beach in Hawaii. It's also Maui's most consistent surf break, with waves year-round, and monstrous ones in winter. When gusting winds turn the waves to slop, the sailboarders get Hookipa all to themselves. When the winds are light or dead, surfers savor the glassy conditions, while sailboarders tend to neglected areas of their lives ashore, or mope on the beach. Most of the time, though, both sailboarders and surfers are out, and they've had to learn to get along. The swimming is terrible here, but there's nowhere better to get the flavor of Maui's surf-and-wind-stoked beach culture. Hookipa has a narrow sandy beach with many rocks, a pavilion, showers, restrooms, lifeguards, and two parking lots. It's good form to park in the upper lot and leave the lower spaces for the surfers, sailboarders, and all their gear. Plus, the upper lot offers a better vantage point for watching the action at sea.

The arduous winding road to Hana passes waterfall after waterfall, but you won't find a decent beach to sit on until you reach **Wainapanapa State Park,** right before Hana. A small, steep, black-sand beach here plunges into deep sparkling waters so blue they're practically black sometimes. This beach can be treacherous for swimmers, but it's a great place to explore, situated as it is on a jagged *a'a* lava coastline. During calm days, a small cave at one end demands investigation. Duck through the low entrance and you'll find a chamber with a ceiling high enough to stand upright beneath, with waves rolling in through a second entrance open to the sea. Along the rugged shore, you'll find sea stacks, a blow hole, a stone arch, and colonies of seabirds. There's also a native *hala* forest, a Hawaiian burial ground, a

Tow-in Surfing at Jaws

The wave at **Jaws**, aka Peahi, rose to fame with the birth of tow-in surfing in the 1990s. It breaks far offshore and only on the largest winter swells. The chances it will break while you're visiting Maui aren't good. But if you hit it right, and you happen to have four-wheel-drive, you might get to see it for yourself. (Bring binoculars, though—it breaks way out.) The cliffs where people watch from aren't easy to get to, and you have to cut across privately owned agricultural land to get there. Keep in mind that if people trash the place, the pineapple company that owns it might put up a gate. To get here from Paia, drive east on Hana Highway (Hwy. 36) to Hahana Road, between mile markers 13 and 14, on the left. Bear left at the fork in the road and continue to the end of the pavement, then continue on the dirt road along the gulch until you reach the coast. There's no beach here, but you'll feel safer up on the cliffs anyway.

legendary water-filled cave, a *heiau,* and an ancient coastal trail that leads to Hana, plus campgrounds and cabins (p. 256). A strong sense of old Hawaii hangs over this place, something that's not so common in modern Hawaii anymore.

Safer swimming can be found 2 miles past Hana at picturesque **Hamoa Beach** ★, an exquisite stretch of gray sand backed by cliffs and shaded by palm trees. It's got good snorkeling during calm conditions, but you're more likely to find the waves up and the bodysurfing and surfing on. The Hotel Hana Maui shuttles its guests here, but there's never much of a crowd.

Back in Hana, along Hana Bay and at the base of a 390-foot-tall red cinder cone called Kauiki Hill, local kids love to swim at **Hana Beach Park.** You'll also find **Maui Ocean Activities** (☎ 808/667-2001) here, an outfit renting kayaks and offering surf lessons and snorkel tours (p. 309). There's a far more exotic—and hard to reach—place to swim on the other side of Kauiki Hill, where a large section of the cone collapsed and created **Kaihalulu Beach,** or simply **Red Sand Beach** (the trail begins at the end of Uakea Rd.). Loose cinders make it easy to lose your footing on the steep, treacherous trail. (Some unlucky beachgoers have been seriously injured and even killed along it, so *please* be careful). It takes about 15 minutes to hike. If you make it to the end, you'll find a secluded little cove with vibrant red sand and a jagged wall of lava sheltering the beach from the surf's direct hits. Kaihalulu means "roaring sea," and it's wise to take heed; even the protected water here can churn restlessly. The trail crosses private property belonging to the Hotel Hana Maui, and one confused sign at the trail head sends a mixed message: NO TRESPASSING and USE AT YOUR OWN RISK. If the trail is muddy, don't risk it. Otherwise, you should still walk cautiously and leave your modesty behind: Owing to Red Sand Beach's seclusion, charm, and tradition, swimsuits routinely come off here.

THE TOP SIGHTS & ATTRACTIONS

The sights and attractions of Maui fall into several distinct categories.

ANCIENT MAUI

Although far too many ancient Hawaiian archaeological sites have been lost to cities, hotels, and houses, many physical traces of ancient Hawaii remain. Some of the most enduring are the rock temple foundations of *heiau,* ancient Hawaiian places of worship and sacrifice. *Heiau* were numerous and dedicated to a variety of purposes—fishing, agriculture, fertility, surfing, rain. A few were built especially for human sacrifice. *Kahuna,* the priests who mediated affairs between the mortal world and the gods, tended them all.

Maui has the largest and most impressive surviving *heiau* in the entire island chain, **Piilanihale Heiau** ★★ (a half mile down Ulaino Rd., off Hana Hwy. near mile marker 31; ☎ 808/248-8912; Mon–Fri 10am–2pm; $10 adults, free for children 12 and under). Built in the 16th century by King Piilani (who also built the King's Hwy., a coastal trail that once circled the island), this massive seaside war temple on the Hana coast stands 50 feet high in places and covers an area as large as two football fields. Try to imagine it adorned with wooden fencing and thatched *hales*—features that didn't survive but that would have been found when the *heiau* was in use. Jungle swallowed the site until the 1970s, helping to keep its existence secret from all but a handful of Native Hawaiians. The ethnobotanical **Kahanu Gardens,** part of the National Tropical Botanical Gardens, has since grown up around the *heiau.* You can take a wonderful self-guided tour of the whole place, which is filled with tropical plants that include 130 cultivars of breadfruit tree. Stream flooding periodically closes the gardens, so call ahead to be sure it's open.

Two more easily accessible *heiau* sit on a hilltop near Wailuku, with a sweeping view of central Maui and Kahului Bay. One of the twin temples at **Halekii-Pihana Heiau State Monument** (at the end of Hea Place off Kuhio Place from Waiehu Beach Rd.; 8am–7pm; free) was dedicated to human sacrifice—though not just any human sacrifice. You had to be an *alii* (high chief) of the purest lineage to be sacrificed here. The last sacrifice is believed to have been performed by Kamehameha in 1790, to honor his war god after he vanquished Maui's army.

Human Sacrifice

According to mid-19th-century Hawaiian writer Samuel Kamakau, a typical human sacrifice went something like this: After the victim was killed, the corpse was reddened over a fire, then placed face down with the right arm wrapped around a pig and the left hand holding a bunch of bananas. A high chief used a ceremonial hook to pierce the mouth, then recited a chant offering the sacrifice to the gods. Afterward, those assembled listened carefully for the sound of a bird, a rat, or a lizard—the gods' acknowledgement that the sacrifice had been accepted.

Maui's Closest Neighbors

From South Maui, two neighbor islands dominate the horizon. The one on the right is **Lanai** (see chapter 5), which was once dedicated to pineapple cultivation and is now home to posh resorts. The dry dome-shaped island to the left is **Kahoolawe.** From World War II until 1990, the U.S. Navy used this uninhabited island as a bombing range for aircraft and ships, giving the island its former nickname, the Target Island. During the 1970s, Kahoolawe became a rallying point for Native Hawaiian activists, who wanted the bombing stopped and the land restored. Protests, arrests, lawsuits, and the death of two activists lost at sea while trying to paddle surfboards to the island followed. Finally, in 1990, the military stopped bombing and began cleaning up unexploded ordnance. In 1993, the island was conveyed to the state, and restoration work has continued since then. State law limits use of the island to noncommercial cultural, scientific, and educational purposes.

(Kamehameha had wanted a high Maui chieftess who had offended him at Kaupo at the center of the ceremony. He sent for her, but her foster sister arrived instead and took her place.) When you're looking around, keep in mind that this isn't a pristine archaeological site. One of Kamehameha's widows, Queen Kaahumanu, had one of the *heiau* demolished after she converted to Christianity. A road and a waterline later cut through the site, and a bunker was built here during World War II to defend the island against a possible Japanese attack. In 1958 the Maui Historical Society reassembled the demolished *heiau* and restored the other as best it could.

Deeply cut into the West Maui Mountains behind Wailuku, **Iao Valley State Park** (end of Ian Valley Rd.) has an inviting network of paths for strolling and picnicking. A lively stream cascades through the valley and an enormous 2,250-foot felty-green basalt pillar, the Iao Needle, rivets everyone's attention. The tranquillity of the place belies its bloody history. This is where Kamehameha, during his drive to conquer the island chain, smashed Maui's army in 1790. The bodies of so many Maui warriors ended up in the stream that the battle was named Kepaniwai, "the damming of the waters." Maui's defenders may have been motivated in their fight to the death by a prophesy warning that if an enemy succeeded in entering Iao Valley, where generations of *alii* were buried, the Maui kingdom would fall and its way of life would end—which is exactly what happened.

MAUI'S NATURAL WONDERS

In contrast to the misty green interior of Iao Valley, the south shore's **Ahihi-Kinau Natural Area Preserve** is a dry, desolate, largely barren landscape where lava poured into the sea during Haleakala's last eruption. (Most sources give the date as 1790, but recent radiocarbon dating puts the last eruption between the years 1480 and 1600.) The preserve—where taking fish, rocks, sand, or any other part of the natural world is prohibited—includes some of **La Perouse Bay,** where the

A Hawaiian Cultural Immersion & All-You-Can-Eat Buffet

Hoomanao ★★★ kids (1251 Front St., Old Lahaina Luau grounds, across from Cannery Mall; ☎ 800/248-5828 or 808/667-1998; www.oldlahainaluau.com; Wed and Fri 8:30–11:30am; $69 adults, $49 children 12 and under) is part luau, part breakfast buffet, and part hands-on trip through Hawaiian history and culture. After a hula and a breakfast including kalua pig, scrambled eggs, and coffee, you move through three stations, or *kulana*. In the hula *kulana,* you see how the dance was more to early Hawaiians than simple entertainment. It recorded genealogies, chronicled history, and honored gods, as well as titillated. You can learn a few hula moves if you like, or just keep time with a gourd or rattle. In the warfare *kulana,* you learn about the nature of battle in Hawaiian society, and you get to examine reproductions of ancient Hawaiian weapons such as clubs, shark-tooth daggers, slingshots, and spears (which you're invited to throw). In the third *kulana,* you explore the native Hawaiian land-use system, the *ahupuaa* (so named because the district boundaries were marked by piles of stone, *ahu,* topped by the heads of pigs, *puaa*). Here you'll see how Hawaiians fished using throw nets, created *tapa* cloth by pounding bark, and made poi by pounding taro root (and you'll get a chance to try your hand at each of these). This program is a fun and filling (thanks to the all-you-can-eat buffet) way to learn about ancient Hawaii. The unusual hands-on activities can captivate even the most ardent history-hating kid.

first known Westerners (the French in this case) appeared on Maui. Jean Francois de Galaup de La Perouse and his crews anchored two frigates here one night in 1786 before sailing on and ultimately disappearing with all hands (their fate was a mystery until 2005, when divers found evidence that the expedition ran aground in the South Pacific on a reef off the Solomon Islands). A coastal trail along the shore of La Perouse Bay cuts through the extensive remains of the **Hawaiian fishing village of Keoneoio.** From the trail (from which you should not stray), you can see numerous stone walls, housing and canoe-shed foundations, a *heiau,* a fishing shrine, and grinding depressions. The snorkeling is fantastic here when waters are calm. And the inaccessible island of Kahoolawe looms 7 miles offshore.

MAUI'S CULTURE & HISTORY

On Maui's cliff-lined northwest coast, Native Hawaiians in **Kahakuloa Valley** have revived the ancient *auwai,* or aqueducts, that their ancestors built to carry fresh water to their taro fields. Not only does taro flourish in the valley once more, so does Hawaiian culture. Because the valley is private, the only way to see what's

going on is to sign up with **Ekahi Tours** ✯ (390 Papa St., Kahului; ☎888/292-2422 or 808/877-9775; www.ekahi.com; $80 adults, $75 seniors, $60 children). This Hawaiian-run company has connections with the residents of Kahakuloa, and entree to the valley. This is definitely a worthwhile splurge if you're truly interested in learning about Hawaiian culture by rolling up your pants and sleeves and plunging your feet and arms into a muddy taro field (you'll be invited to help with the work). The valley's residents also raise papaya, sugar cane, and other staples of the ancient Hawaiian diet. You'll get a tour of the entire valley, cross a swinging bridge (which gives some people pause), and come away with an indelible impression of what life must have been like in the islands for the 1,500 years before Captain Cook showed up. This 7-hour tour includes a scenic drive around the West Maui Mountains, and sometimes includes a stop at a *heiau* on private land—if the owners feel like having visitors that day.

Another excellent and more budget-oriented way to learn about Hawaii from Hawaiians, and to paddle a canoe while you're at it, is with the 2-hour tour offered by the Hawaiian cultural group **Maui Nui O Kama** ✯✯ (Kealia Park on North Kihei Rd., next to Kealia condominium; ☎ 808/242-8536 or 808/276-7219; daily 7:30–9:30am; $40 donation). The tour begins with a Hawaiian chant, followed by an overview of the sacred names of the various components of a canoe, which is followed by paddling instruction. Then you board one of three canoes and paddle off to the wetlands, where you hop out to explore. Next you paddle out to investigate a coral reef (jokingly known as "the Hawaiian refrigerator" for its abundance of readily accessible seafood). Along the way your guide covers a variety of topics, including native species and ecosystems, the *ahupuaa* land-use system, how Hawaiians fished and farmed by the lunar calendar, and how invading forces could tell a weak chief from a strong one by the condition of his fishponds (and thereby determine the strength of the resistance they could expect at a particular locale). Call for reservations.

You'll find a unique collection of ancient Hawaiian artifacts in Hana at the **Hana Cultural Center and Museum** (4974 Uakea Rd.; ☎ 808/248-8622). The everyday nature of many of the items—a grater for shredding coconut, brooms made from the spines of palm fronds, a hooked *lomilomi* stick that people used to massage their own backs—helps to bridge the distance from ancient times to ours. On the grounds, you'll also find excellent examples of various Hawaiian *hales* (houses)—a living *hale,* a meeting *hale,* a cooking *hale,* a menstrual *hale*—plus the tiny **Hana District Police Station, Courthouse, and Jail.** The old jail, basically a wooden shed with a heavy door, has been decommissioned. But a judge still drives from Wailuku to hear cases at a desk in the pint-size courthouse, which does double duty as the police station, on the first Tuesday of every month.

Maui's best collection of Native Hawaiian artifacts resides in an old missionary home in Wailuku, the **Bailey House Museum** ✯✯✯ (2375-A Main St.; ☎ 808/244-3326; www.mauimuseum.org; Mon–Sat 9am–4pm; $4 adults, $3.50 seniors, $1 children 7–12, free for children 6 and under). You'll also find an extensive collection of missionary-era artifacts and furnishings, as well as the beautiful oil paintings of Edward Bailey, a missionary teacher whose landscapes provide a surprising documentary record of Maui in transition from 1866 to 1896. Notice the Western-style buildings outnumbering traditional Hawaiian shelters in many of his canvases. The museum grounds abound in native plants.

Walking Tour: A Missionaries & Whalers Walking Tour of Historic Lahaina

Start: The Richards House site, across Front Street from the Pioneer Inn, in the heart of historic Lahaina.
Finish: Hale Pai, at the end of Lahainaluna Road.
Best Time: Morning.
Worst Time: Heat of the day.

The **Lahaina Restoration Foundation** (☎ 808/661-3262), a nonprofit group responsible for saving and now managing much of historic Lahaina, publishes a pamphlet called ***"Lahaina O Moolelo: A walking tour of historic and cultural sites in Lahaina, First Capitol of the Kingdom of Hawaii"*** (available at the Baldwin Home Museum and many other historic sites around town; free). It has a map, two recommended walking tours (one takes 30 min., the other 1½ hr.), and descriptions of 30 sites—more than most people get around to seeing. But if you aren't inclined to do the whole thing, just head straight for the highlights:

1 The Richards House site

The walking-tour brochure describes this as the homesite of a missionary, the Rev. William Richards, but today you'll find a pleasant little park in its place. This tranquil place is a good spot to duck into, out of the stream of tourists marching up and down Front Street. You can just sit in the cool shade of a palm tree, stare out upon Lahaina's sparkling waters, and reflect on history. Consider this: Angry whalers once maneuvered their ship just offshore and fired insults and cannonballs at this spot. They did this after Richards, Lahaina's first Protestant missionary, persuaded the Hawaiian *alii* to prohibit women from visiting ships. This house survived the cannonade, but has been lost to time.

Next door is:

2 The Baldwin Home Museum ★★

This stately old missionary home (and the oldest Western-style structure on Maui) has a role similar to the Bailey House Museum in Wailuku. Within its 3-foot-thick walls of lava rock and coral block, missionary doctor Dwight Baldwin treated ailing Hawaiians, raised six baby Baldwins, and inadvertently started one of Hawaii's most powerful commercial dynasties. As a museum, located in the tourist-thick heart of Lahaina, it has all sorts of furnishings and artifacts from the missionary era, as well as kindly volunteers who turn into deep wells of history if given the chance. Check out the trellises behind the house; the grapes that Mother Baldwin planted still grow on them. (The museum is open daily 10am–4pm. Fee: $3 adults, $2 seniors, $5 families.) For more information, call ☎ 808/661-3262 or go to www.lahainarestoration.org.

Next door to the Baldwin Home, on the corner of Front St. and Dickenson St., is:

3 The Masters' Reading Room

This was an old missionary storehouse that was rededicated as a hangout for

ships' officers, filled with newspapers, Bibles, and other wholesome reading material. With the Baldwins dwelling right next door, you know the masters couldn't have gotten too rowdy here. For that, they might have gone down the street to site no. 4.

About a half mile north on Front St. (you're forgiven if you decide to drive) is the:

4 U.S. Seaman's Hospital

This site at 1024 Front St. was built as an inn by King Kamehameha III for visiting seamen, and it was also one of his favorite places to drink, gamble, and spend time with his beloved sister, Nahienaena. To the horror of the missionaries, he was romantically involved with her (an ancient practice among the *alii* that had yet to die out). The U.S. government leased the inn from the king in 1844 for use as a seamen's hospital, and that's how the building is known today, as the U.S. Seaman's Hospital. Today it houses a television production company, so, unfortunately, you can see it only from the outside.

On your way to or from the Seaman's Hospital, you'll pass 858 Front St., which is the entrance to:

5 The Wo Hing Temple ✯

Built in the early 20th century by Chinese immigrants, under the auspices of the Chee Kung Tong, sort of the Chinese version of the Masons, the Wo Hing Temple place (☎ 808/661-3262; daily 10am–4pm; donations welcome) was originally designed as a fraternal meeting hall and social club. By the 1940s, though, most Chinese had moved from Maui to Honolulu, where the business opportunities were better, and the building became a home for Chinese old folks. There's a Taoist altar upstairs and a few interesting artifacts in the main building, but the real attraction is in the cookhouse next door, and it has nothing to do with Chinese immigrants or food. In the cookhouse, amid the enormous woks and other early-19th-century cooking implements, is a big-screen TV continuously showing rare movies of Hawaii shot by Thomas Alva Edison between 1898 and 1906. You'll see Honolulu street scenes (including an extended shot taken from a moving street car), Honolulu Harbor in the days when it was still filled with tall ships, and Hawaiians on horseback all dressed up, bedecked in leis and riding off to a big luau. In a long pan across Waikiki Beach, watch for a sloped-shoulder older guy walking toward the camera in coat and a straw boater—that's Edison's cameo shot. The cookhouse is a quiet, shady place where you can not only find respite from the hustle and bustle of modern Lahaina, but also come away with a strong impression of old Hawaii.

Turn off Front St. onto Lahainaluna Rd., and make a right onto Wainee, where you'll come to:

6 The Seamen's Cemetery

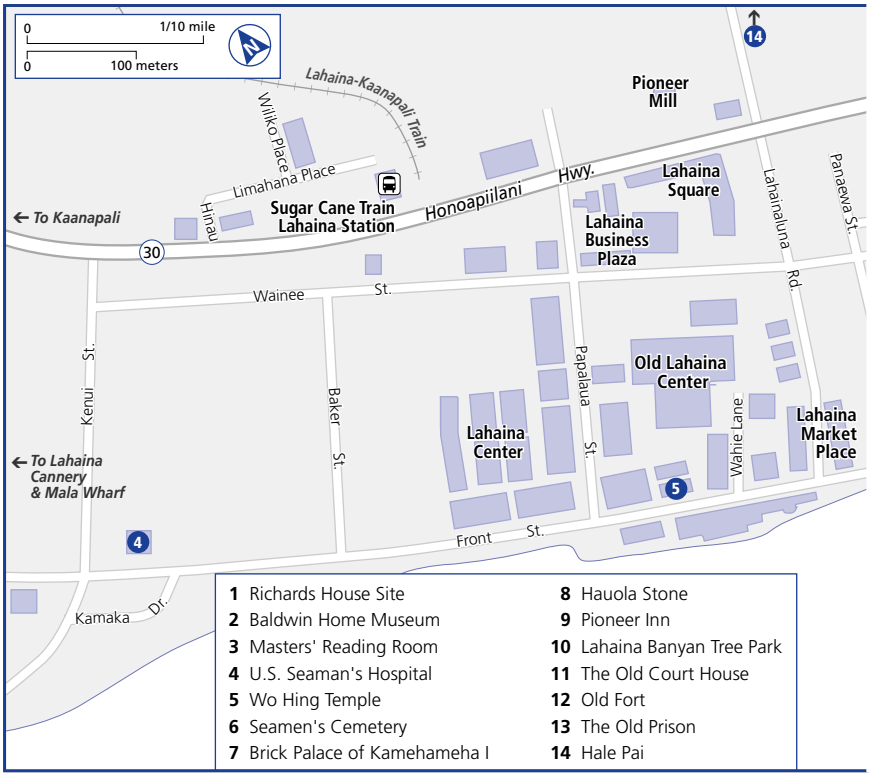
Some of the patients who didn't do well at the U.S. Seaman's Hospital, or who died at sea before reaching Lahaina, lay at rest here. They include a cousin of Herman Melville, as well as one of Melville's shipmates (felled by a "disreputable disease"). Only a few marked graves remain.

Make your way back to the Baldwin Home, cross Front St., and walk down the lane toward the harbor, where you'll find a depression in the ground known as:

7 The Brick Palace of Kamehameha I site

Like the Richards House, Kamehameha's Brick Palace is another place on the official walking tour that isn't actually there, though in this case, its outline

Lahaina Walking Tour



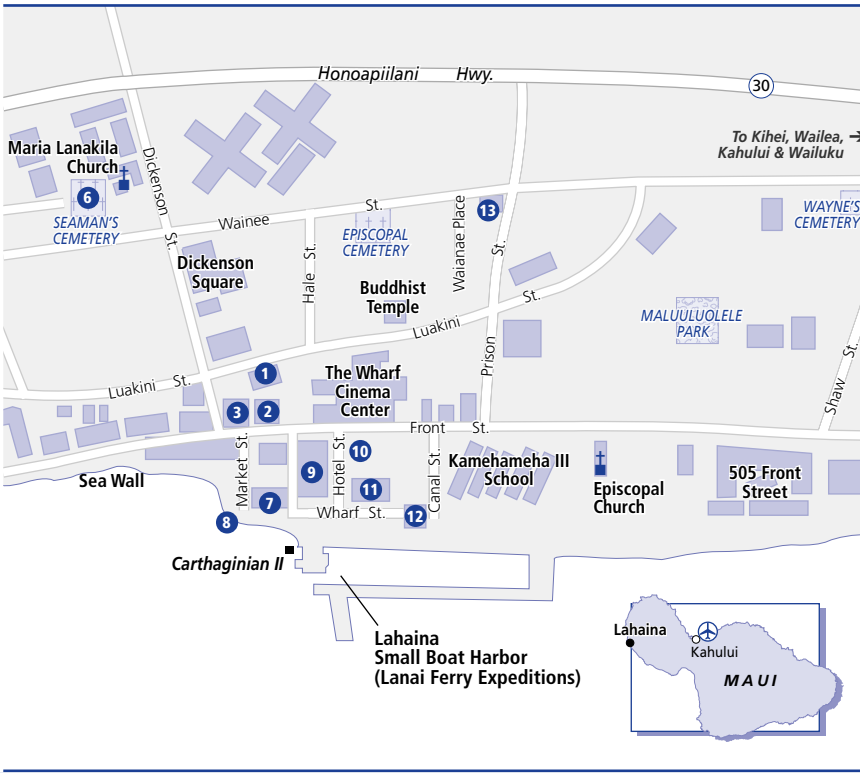
remains. Kamehameha was fascinated with the idea of Western-style buildings. When two British ex-convicts found their way to Hawaii after doing time in Australia, Kamehameha had them build a two-story, 20-by-40-foot palace, sometime between 1798 and 1802. The king used the building to welcome the earliest sea captains who found their way to Maui. He tried to give the palace to his favorite wife, Queen Kaahumanu, but she wasn't as enamored of brick-and-mortar as her husband and wouldn't stay there. Later, the building served as a warehouse and a meetinghouse, until it collapsed about 70 years after it went up. The footprint of the building was unearthed in the 1960s and lined with brick and concrete, which is what you see today.

A few steps away from the palace and over the seawall in the ocean, you'll find:

8 The Hauola Stone

It's the boulder with a vague similarity to a couch. It was used as a birthing stone for *alii* and probably for healing as well. Such stones exist all over Hawaii, but most of them have been forgotten. The memory of this one, thanks to its central location, endures.

The big green building beside you, on the corner of Wharf and Hotel sts., is:



9 The Pioneer Inn

This is the oldest hotel in Hawaii. The original structure, facing the harbor, was built in 1901. A large addition, built in the same style as the original, dates to 1965. The rooms in the old section are now used as apartments for the hotel staff—they're too dilapidated for guests—but the front desk, bar, and restaurant still inhabit the original structure. The Pioneer Inn is the only site on the historic walking tour that serves alcohol. The bar is a great place to grab a beer and join the colorful mix of visitors and townies that frequent the place. Through much of the 20th century, the Pioneer Inn was at the center of Maui partying and debauchery. Today it's a Best Western property, and, for better or for worse, it has shaken much of its seediness. For a taste of how things used to be, check it out at Halloween, when Lahaina thinks it's New Orleans during Mardi Gras (pre-Katrina), and the old hotel sits once again in the middle of the ribald merriment. Call ☎ 808/661-3636 to get more information.

Across Wharf St. from the Pioneer Inn is:

10 Lahaina Banyan Tree Park

By 1873, the Protestant missionaries had finished their work, their children had become sugar barons and other prosperous citizens, and a golden

anniversary was at hand. To mark the half century that had passed since missionaries first arrived on Maui in 1823, Lahaina's sheriff planted an 8-foot-tall Indian banyan tree at a gathering spot by the water. It grew to fill ⅔ of an acre and serves as the psychic and arboreal center of town: Lahaina Banyan Tree Park.

Between the park and Lahaina Harbor sits:

11 The Old Courthouse

Originally used as a courthouse, a customhouse, a post office, the tax collector's office, and for all sorts of other civic purposes, this building now houses an art gallery, a visitor center, a gift shop, a nice whaling museum (where you can see the enormous ear bone of a sperm whale and great examples of 19th-century scrimshaw), and—this is worth a mental note—public restrooms.

On either side of the courthouse are the remains of:

12 The Old Fort

After the attack on the Reverend Richards's house, the Hawaiian government built a waterfront fort to answer, or better yet deter, rogue seamen should they feel moved to attack the town again. It was built from coral blocks removed from the ocean where the harbor is now. In reality, seamen laughed at the old fort, which seemed fitter for show than cannon battles. Mostly it was used as a prison. After the original was dismantled in the 1850s, its pieces were carted a few blocks away and reassembled into a more substantial prison. In the 1970s, using original coral blocks the county scrounged up somewhere, a replica of two corners of the old fort were built here, and that's what passes as the old fort today.

Walk down Prison St. to the corner of Wainee St., and you'll find:

13 The Old Prison ★★★

This sprawling 19th-century detention center, known as Hale Paahao or "Stuck-in-Irons House," takes up a whole block. A wood-frame stockade at the center of the grounds has the tiny cot-size cells where prisoners, mostly seamen, served time for such offenses as reckless horseback riding, Sabbath violating, and drunkenness. Prisoners convicted of more serious offenses were shipped off to Honolulu.

14 Hale Pai

This is one point of interest on the historic walking tour that's too far from town to walk to. It's the printing shop the missionaries built at Lahainaluna Seminary. The seminary, founded in 1831 on a mountainside high above town, is now a public high school (Lahaina Luna High School campus, at the end of Lahainaluna Road; ☎ 808/667-7040), and one with the distinction of being the oldest educational institution west of the Rockies. Inside the printing house (open Mon–Fri 10am–4pm), you'll find a replica of the original press along with examples of the thousands of Hawaiian-language Bibles, maps, textbooks, histories, children's readers, newspapers, laws, and whatnot the press churned out. The seminary's students were hired to work the press, so not only were they reading their lessons, they were printing them. Located 700 feet above Lahaina, the seminary was a safe distance from the licentious influence of the whaling port below, and Hale Pai is worth a visit for the view alone. But seeing the examples of the material created here is worth the visit, too. In one richly illustrated book called *Ka Olelo no ka Hoholona o Ka Honua, or, Explanation of the Beasts of*

Whaling Museum

If Maui's whaling era stirs your imagination, try to go to Kaanapali to visit the **Whaling Museum** ★ (2435 Kaanapali Pkwy., at Whalers Village shopping area; ☎ 808/661-5992; 9am–10pm; free). It showcases some surprising artifacts—including an assortment of whale-bone pie crimpers and jagging wheels that sailors made for their sweethearts—that suggest a tenderness, and an interest in baking, that's rarely associated with hardened whalers. Nautical, political, whimsical, gloomy, and romantic themes that recur in their scrimshaw (hand carvings on whale teeth and bone) reflect their loneliness, joys, interests, and obsessions. Clearly, they liked sailing ships, and much of their scrimshaw dwells on square-riggers in intricate detail. Check out the scrimshaw of Alwida the Female Pirate. Somehow the museum dug up the original source from which this image was copied, and you can see the print version of Alwida, found in a 19th-century book on Dutch and Norman pirates, displayed side by side with the whale-tooth version.

the Earth, you discover that kangaroo translates into Hawaiian as "kanegaroo" and reindeer becomes "reinadia." You also see that the missionaries work in Hawaii involved more than just thumping the Bible and suppressing the hula.

MAUI'S PLANTATIONS

Alexander & Baldwin Sugar Museum ★ (3957 Hansen Rd., Puunene, about 10 min. from the main airport; ☎ 808/871-8058; www.sugarmuseum.com; Mon–Sat 9:30am–4:30pm, but call to confirm seasonal hours; $5 adult, $2 children 6–17) is a proud, simple, enthusiastic monument to an industry that shaped and once dominated Maui. Occupying the former home of a plantation superintendent, the museum traces the spectacular feats of 19th-century engineering that brought water from east Maui rainforests to the arid isthmus, where most of the cane was planted. The museum also documents the technological twists and turns of extracting sugar from cane, and it pays tribute to the Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Filipino, and other immigrants who came to work in the fields and mills, and who forever altered Hawaii's racial and cultural mix. (I especially like the exhibit depicting one of the favorite pastimes of plantation workers—cock fights. When you look at the razor-sharp gaffes on the feet of the two birds frozen in taxidermic battle, it's not hard to imagine feathers flying in a real fight.) The museum is also something of a shrine to the plantation's founders, Samuel Alexander and Henry Baldwin, the sons of Lahaina missionaries who created Alexander & Baldwin Inc., one of the most powerful companies in the state. The museum is easy enough to find, located as it is outside of Kahului in the shadow of the sugar mill's towering smokestacks, which you can see from miles away.

Plantation life was kind of slow, and as theme parks go, so is the **Maui Tropical Plantation** kids (1670 Honoapiilani Hwy., Waikapu; ☎ 800/451-6805 or 808/244-7643; daily 9am–5pm). But if you're interested in agriculture, you would like to learn more about Hawaii's big mono-crops (sugar cane and pineapples), and you like spider monkeys, this 60-acre celebration of the plantation days is worth a stop. You can look around on your own for free, but it's better to take the narrated 40-minute tram ride ($9.50 adults, $3.50 kids) through pineapple and cane fields and a papaya orchard. Characters in plantation garb husk coconuts and demonstrate lei making. There's also a nice gift shop and a little restaurant, where comical spider monkeys keep the mood light.

MAUI'S ARCHITECTURE & ART

If you're in the neighborhood of the Maui Tropical Plantation, take a look at the nearby **Frank Lloyd Wright–designed clubhouse** (at the King Kamehameha Golf Club, 2500 Honoapiilani Hwy.; ☎ 808/244-2011). Wright didn't design the building for golfers, and he couldn't have known it would end up in Hawaii—but here it is. The Pennsylvania family it was designed for never built it. Movie star Marilyn Monroe and her literary husband, Arthur Miller, bought the plans with the intention of building the house in Connecticut, but they split up before getting to it. The Japanese billionaire who built this golf course bought the design and built what has become the only Frank Lloyd Wright–designed building in Hawaii. Wright, a genius at designing in harmony with nature, would have been aghast at how the clubhouse clashes with the landscape.

Before you get to Maui, I'd suggest that you go online and find out what will be happening when you're in the area at **Hui Noeau Visual Arts Center** (2841 Baldwin Ave., Makawao; ☎ 808/572-6560; www.huinoeau.com; daily 10am–4pm; free but donations welcome). A Mediterranean-style plantation mansion (built by those Baldwins again) on the green upcountry hills outside of Makawao, Hui Noeau gets six to eight outstanding art exhibits a year. I saw one called "Wood Skin Ink," which explored the close and colorful relationship between Japanese woodblock carvers, painters, and tattoo artists. Hui Noeau also has regularly scheduled talks by visiting artists, as well as an ongoing series of classes and 1-day workshops (p. 303), which the grounds have been modified to accommodate. The old horse stable, for instance, is now the ceramics studio; the carriage house has become the print studio; and adjoining spaces have been turned into woodworking and jewelry studios.

To see one of the finest permanent art collections on Maui, go to the **Grand Wailea Resort, Hotel & Spa** ★★ (3860 Wailea Alanui Dr., Wailea). The Japanese billionaire who built the place has put much of his personal collection on display here, including works by **Pablo Picasso, Andy Warhol, Fernand Leger,** and **Fernando Botero,** as well as Hawaii artists like **Herb Kane.** You don't have to be a hotel guest to view the collection, and there's no charge. But if you want to park here, you have to surrender your car to the valet, and that traditionally involves a tip upon its return. Of course, you can also park for free at one of the public beach-access parking lots between hotels—look for the county's blue beach-access signs—and walk along the shore to the Grand Wailea. Once you get there, go to the concierge desk and ask for the *Art Directory,* a free guide to all of the works on display. You won't have any trouble finding **Botero's bronze sculptures.**

Botero clearly likes women—large, languorous, nude women—and you'll see several of them lounging around the main courtyard, surrounding the Botero Bar. Botero's *Woman Smoking a Cigarette,* (she lies on her stomach puffing away, one foot daintily lifted) is the size of a midget submarine. Be sure to step into the bar's pavilion and look up at the ceiling, where you'll see **Douglas Riseborough**'s marvelous merging of classical Italian *trompe l'oeil* with Polynesian characters and themes. In the hotel's **NaPua Gallery** (☎ 808/874-0510 or 800/800-6554; www.napuagallery.com), you'll find 13 of Warhol's Marilyn Monroes and a set of 18 original Picasso lithographs in which two classic figurative nudes grow increasingly Picasso-like, the artist's study of his own evolution from realism to abstractionism.

MAUI'S OCEAN, SHORE & SEA LIFE

At press time, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (www.fws.gov) had yet to open its new 2,200-foot-long boardwalk through the **Kealia Pond National Wildlife Refuge** (along North Kihei Rd., between Kihei and Maalaea; ☎ 808/875-1582). But once the boardwalk is opened (hopefully by the time you arrive), it will be worth a stroll along—especially in the winter. (The delay is due to several problems; among other things, the contractor used nails rather than screws on the recycled planking material, and boards were popping up right and left).

Kealia Pond is a 691-acre saltwater marsh and bird sanctuary, which attracts 30 species of waterfowl and shorebirds, including the endangered Hawaiian stilts, Hawaiian coots, ducks, egrets, herons, sanderlings, ruddy turnstones, wandering tattlers, and the Pacific golden plover, which shows up every winter after a 2,500-mile flight from Alaska. During summer the water levels drop and the pond may completely dry out, revealing why the Hawaiians called the area Kealia, or "salt-encrusted place." The dropping water levels also create an incomparable stench. The Hawaiians used this marsh as a salt pan as well as a fishpond.

Hawaiians stocked their fishponds by building gates to the ocean wide enough for juvenile fish to enter but too narrow for fully grown fish to get back through. You can see a full-scale working model of this, complete with fish, in the "Hawaiians & the Sea" exhibit at the **Maui Ocean Center** ★★★ (192 Maalaea Rd., Maalaea Harbor Village shopping area, near the harbor; ☎ 808/270-7000; www.mauioceancenter.com; daily 9am–5pm, open until 6pm July–Aug; $20 adults, $17 seniors, $13 children 3–12, $13 military). This $20-million state-of-the-art aquarium is packed with marine life from Hawaiian waters, and it's definitely worth a visit.

The main attraction is an enormous 750,000-gallon tank filled with sharks, sting rays, thousands of fish, and, at regular intervals, divers who have communications equipment in their face masks so they can field questions from the crowd of visitors peering at them from outside the tank, as they hand-feed the sharks and rays. The outdoor exhibits include turtles, tide pools, and hammerhead sharks. The indoor exhibits organize marine life by depth: the shallow reef (0–30 ft.), midreef (30–60 ft.), and deep reef (60 ft. and beyond). Some of the creatures you'll encounter are downright bizarre. I can't get over the garden eels; they burrow in clusters, never entirely leave their holes, but emerge enough to sway together in the current like tallgrass—or some uncanny grass/eel hybrid. So skittish are they, you have to view them through one-way glass. If they knew you were watching, they wouldn't come out.

I appreciate this aquarium's natural approach to displaying sea life. You won't find any killer whales trained to jump through hoops or seals trained to balance balls on their noses, but you will find naturalists trained to share facts like this: 80% of the reefs in the United States are in Hawaii; and Hawaii's state fish used to be the *humuhumunukunukuapuaa* (the triggerfish), but the designation expired and now Hawaii doesn't have a state fish.

Tip 1: The indoor exhibits are dark and cool and usually packed after 10:30am. To avoid the crowd, get here when the place opens at 9am. Also, avoid rainy days. When it rains, the ordinary attendance of 1,500 visitors per day doubles. ***Tip 2:*** The line to get in can take a while to get through. If you book online,

Whale Season

If you visit Maui from November through May, you'll be vacationing with the humpback whales who come here to procreate after spending the summer up north fattening themselves on Alaskan krill. They appear in waters off all the Hawaiian Islands, but they favor Maui's protected south and west shores. The early arrivals show up before Thanksgiving, the whole crowd turns out in February and March, and the die-hards hang around until spring. If you're here during peak season, you can't miss them—they're easily spotted from the shore. But prime viewing locations include **McGregor Point,** off Honoapiilani Highway between Maalaea and Lahaina, at mile marker 9. Further toward Lahaina, pull off anywhere along the Honoapiilani Highway after it drops down from the cliffs and you can watch them from your car. And, really, any oceanfront restaurant or bar on the south or west sides will be a good whale-watching post in peak season.

The other option is to get out on the water. Almost every tour boat on Maui takes people whale-watching, with prices ranging from $25 to $100. I like the 2-hour, $25 tours offered by the **Pacific Whale Foundation** (101 N. Kihei Rd., Kihei; ☎ 808/879-8811; www.pacificwhale.org), a nonprofit conservation group that supports its work through whale and snorkel tours.

Early or late in the season, it's possible to get "skunked," where you don't see any whales at all. Some boats will refund your money or give you tickets for another tour if a skunking occurs. A better situation is to get "mugged," where whales surround your boat, which is then prohibited by law from moving. If you get mugged by a "competition pod," you're floating among a group of amorous males competing for the interest of a female. They slap their tales, smash their heads into one another, dive deeply, ascend rapidly, burst out of the water, and land with enormous splashes. The female may or may not notice, but everyone on the boat will.

Shark Diving & the Secret Sex Lives of Coral

If you're a certified scuba diver and yearn to swim with sharks—safely—the **Maui Ocean Center** (☎ 808/270-7075; reservations required) will let you dive in its shark-filled main tank on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings at 8:30am. The $199 fee includes a tank, weights, and admission for one nondiving guest, so you've got someone to take pictures of your adventure. Though some 20 sharks live in the tank, they're too well fed to pose a threat to scuba divers.

Once each summer, a few days before the new moon in June or July, rice coral all over Hawaii reproduces in one simultaneous, ocean-wide, hermaphroditic blowout. Rice coral releases its own sperm and eggs together to mix in the ocean currents, and scientists can pinpoint—to the hour—when this will happen. That evening, the Maui Ocean Center throws "The Coral Spawning Spectacle" party, where wine and cheese are served while guests await the big moment. If you can't make it for the real thing, check out the video, *The Secret Sex Lives of Coral,* playing in a dark corner of the Shallow Reef exhibit, loaded with highlights.

you can skip the wait and walk right in. The only catch with online ticketing is that it requires an advance purchase of 3 days.

MAUI'S UNBELIEVABLE DRIVING TOURS

For visitors with cars, the island offers some remarkable and memorable drives.

VISITING THE HOUSE OF THE SUN: HALEAKALA NATIONAL PARK ★★★

At the summit of Haleakala, you might find dazzling sunshine throwing crisp shadows across an otherworldly landscape while illuminating a god's-eye view of the Earth. Or you might find dark rains, frigid air, overpowering winds, and thick cloud cover. In either case, you'll encounter hundreds of tourists gathered atop this volcanic peak towering 10,023 feet above the Pacific because it's the foremost visitor attraction on Maui. Despite the masses, the summit experience can be intensely personal and moving—especially if the weather cooperates. This is one site you absolutely must see (unless a doctor advises against it—the National Park Service recommends that pregnant women, people with respiratory problems or heart conditions, or young children get a medical opinion before venturing to the top).

Ancient Hawaiians gave this mountain its name, which means "The House of the Sun," and they considered it especially sacred. In legend, they told of how the demigod Maui lassoed the sun here and beat it with a club in order to slow its trip across the sky and to give his mother longer days to dry her *tapa* cloth. Geologists tell of how Haleakala first emerged from the sea about a million years ago, growing taller and taller through a half-million years of continuous eruption, then shifting to its current mode of sporadic flows. The date of the last eruption is

widely given as 1790. However, a recent radiocarbon study suggests it actually occurred sometime between 1480 and 1600. (Most literature on the subject, including what the National Park Service itself distributes, has yet to catch up with the science.) In any case, Haleakala is a dormant volcano, not an extinct one, and it is expected to go off again—someday.

At the top of Haleakala is a giant hole, 3,300 feet deep and 21 miles around, that was formed by erosion. The mountain once stood several thousand feet higher than it does now, but weather, gravity, and possibly glaciers brought it down a few notches and formed this enormous depression. Though it's actually a valley, in common usage it's become a crater.

Haleakala's summit sits along the crater rim. Most visitors are content to venture there and then turn around. A hardy and well-prepared subset strikes off on hiking trips around the crater floor, or sometimes through Kaupo Gap—one of two huge openings in the rim—and down the side of the mountain to the coast (p. 312). Others take a mule or horse and ride into the crater and back (p. 314). In the afternoon, clouds rising as the day warms typically pour in through the gaps and fill the crater like a giant bowl of cotton. As the day cools, the clouds spill out of the gaps and the crater drains.

If you can get up early enough, you should visit the summit for sunrise. The best time to do this is soon after you arrive on Maui, before your biological clock catches up with the later time zone you're in. It will be easier then to get moving around 3:30am, which is about when you'll need to leave to beat the sun. From Kihei, it takes about 2 hours to drive to the summit. If you can't make it for sunrise, the sunset on Haleakala isn't bad either. For a weather forecast and sunrise or sunset times, call the **National Weather Service** (☎ 808/877-5111). The *Maui News* also publishes sunrise and sunset times.

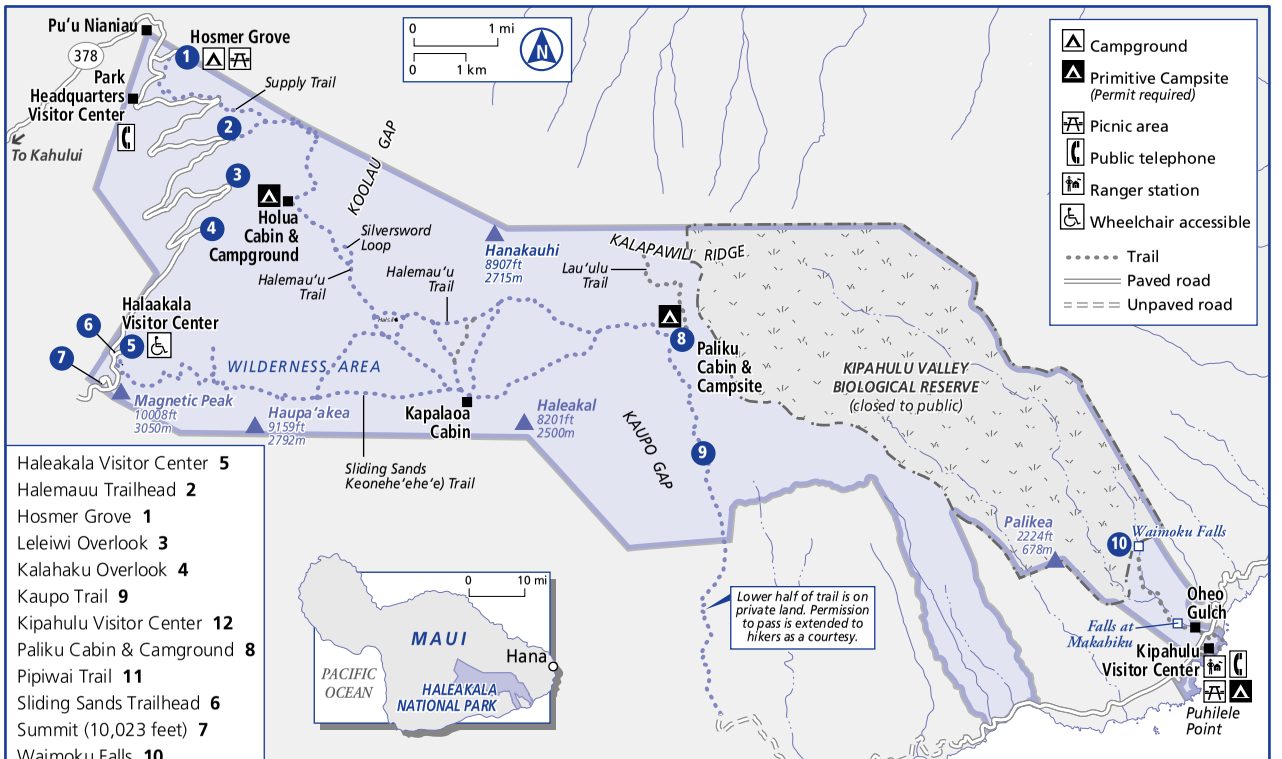
The summit is generally 30°F cooler than the coast, and it can drop to around freezing. If the weather turns cold, as it is prone to do, you'll find the underdressed huddling together, teeth a-chattering (you, of course, had the foresight to layer).

It's a steep drive to the top, up what's considered the steepest ascending road in the world—it climbs 10,000 feet in just 38 miles. Entry into Haleakala National Park costs $10 per car, and if you save the easy-to-lose receipt, you can come back and visit the Kipahulu section of the park (a long drive from the summit entrance, past Hana), without paying again. The entry fee is good for a week.

The first point of interest you'll pass, down a short spur road just inside the park gate, is **Hosmer Grove** kids, an old experimental forest planted with visions of a forest industry that never caught on. There's a short nature walk here, good for car-weary kids and adults alike.

Next, you'll come to the **Park Headquarters Visitor Center** (open 8am–4pm) located at 7,000 feet. I recommend stopping here for 15 or 20 minutes or so to get acclimated to the altitude. Nothing spoils a visit to the heavens quite like the nausea, lethargy, and headaches of altitude sickness. At Park Headquarters, you can poke around the gift shop, study exhibits on how Haleakala formed, or stay outside and look for *nene,* the endangered native geese that frequent the area.

At 8,000 feet, halfway from Park Headquarters to the top, you'll come to the **Leleiwi Overlook** ★, one of the better lookouts along the way. With a short walk, it offers your first view of the crater. Sometimes, in the late afternoon, a bizarre


Pu'u Nianiau
Hosmer Grove
1
378
Park Headquarters Visitor Center
To Kahului
Supply Trail
2
3
Holua Cabin & Campground
4
KOOLAU GAP
Silversword Loop
Halemau'u Trail
Halemau'u Trail
Hanakauhi 8907ft 2715m
Lau'ulu Trail
KALAPAWILI RIDGE
Halaakala Visitor Center
5
6
7
WILDERNESS AREA
Magnetic Peak 10008ft 3050m
Haupa'akea 9159ft 2792m
Kapalaoa Cabin
Haleakal 8201ft 2500m
Sliding Sands Keonehe'ehe'e) Trail
8
Paliku Cabin & Campsite
KIPAHULU VALLEY BIOLOGICAL RESERVE (closed to public)
KAUPO GAP
9
Palikea 2224ft 678m
10
Waimoku Falls
Oheo Gulch
Falls at Makahiku
Kipahulu Visitor Center
Puhilele Point
Lower half of trail is on private land. Permission to pass is extended to hikers as a courtesy.
0 1 mi
0 1 km
N
Campground
Primitive Campsite
(Permit required)
Picnic area
Public telephone
Ranger station
Wheelchair accessible
Trail
Paved road
Unpaved road
0 10 mi
MAUI
Hana
PACIFIC OCEAN
HALEAKALA NATIONAL PARK
Haleakala Visitor Center 5
Halemauu Trailhead 2
Hosmer Grove 1
Leleiwi Overlook 3
Kalahaku Overlook 4
Kaupo Trail 9
Kipahulu Visitor Center 12
Paliku Cabin & Camground 8
Pipiwai Trail 11
Sliding Sands Trailhead 6
Summit (10,023 feet) 7
Waimoku Falls 10

optical phenomenon occurs here, the **Brocken Specter,** in which you see a reflection of yourself, surrounded by a rainbow, in the clouds filling the crater below you.

At 9,000 feet, you'll pass **Kalahaku Overlook,** but you can't pull out here until you're descending the mountain. This is a good place to get a look at the exotic silversword, a globe-shaped plant with rigid silver leaves, found only on Hawaii's three tallest volcanic peaks.

At 9,740 feet, very near the summit, you'll come to a big parking lot and the **Haleakala Visitor Center.** You're essentially at the top now. The visitor center is perched on the carter rim, stocked with postcards and books, and manned by a friendly ranger. This is a popular vantage point for catching the sunrise or sunset. The parking lot here is the staging area for Haleakala's downhill bicycle tours (p. 315), and things can get a little hectic. For some solitude, make the short climb up to the top of **Pa Kaoao,** aka **White Peak,** standing beside the parking lot. Or walk a short way into the crater down **Sliding Sands Trail,** but watch your footing—it wasn't given its name for nothing.

To reach the actual summit, keep driving—at the very top of the mountain, there's a parking lot in the shallow bowl of a cinder cone just beneath the **Puu Ulaula Overlook.** This overlook, a glass-enclosed building open 24 hours, sits at the very uppermost part of the mountain. Naturalists here give 10-minute orientations daily, at 11am, 11:30am, and 12:30pm.

Warning: As you drive back down, be sure to use low gear so you don't ride the brakes and burn them out.

HANA & THE ROAD TO HANA

If you can stay a night or two in Hana, rather than making the arduous drive out and back in the same day, you should. This sleepy little Hawaiian community on Maui's far east side, with its rolling green hills, deep blue sea, and apparent absence of anything whatsoever to do, reveals itself only to those who take time with it. That's one reason to stay. The other is that a good part of Hana's appeal lies not in what you might find there, but in the ride it takes to get there, and the more unhurried the ride the better. An overnight stay can make the difference between a leisurely trip through the thick rainforest and a long, tiring one. It's only 54 miles from Kahului to Hana, but the four dozen one-lane bridges, the 10-to-15-mph speed limits, the hundreds of switchbacks, and the long caravans of rental cars slowing down for every waterfall draw out the distance.

The **Hana Highway** begins at Kahului, and it starts out widely, well paved, and well graded—but that all changes. The road is still good as it passes through the colorful little north shore town of **Paia** ★, well worth a stop for breakfast (by the way, you should leave early), and your last chance for gas (fill the tank before you go). Just beyond Paia, the road passes **Hookipa Beach Park,** the Windsurfing Capital of the World. The windsurfers don't usually show up in the morning, before the winds pick up, but Hookipa has good surf, too, and surfers live for early-morning glass. Hookipa has an upper and a lower parking lot; the upper one gets you out on the point, where you'll get the best view of the action in the water.

At mile marker 16 the road is still good, but some navigational confusion sets in. Hana Highway remains Hana Highway, but as a numbered highway it changes from Highway 36 to Highway 360, and the mile markers restart at zero. About 3 miles later the straight road crunches up like an accordion. But before the curves

begin, after mile marker 2, you'll pass a pullout on the right filled with parked cars and possibly hippies selling fruits, along with arts and crafts. This is **Twin Falls.** The falls are on private property, and they're not a sanctioned tourist site, but the owners (you should drop a buck in their donation box) tolerate the hundreds of daily trespassers and let the hippies do their business. The walk to the first fall takes about 10 minutes, and the second fall takes about 15 minutes. If it's been raining heavily, don't go—the streams you have to negotiate will be swollen and dangerous (that goes for walks along all streams in Hawaii). If you've never seen a waterfall, the Twin Falls are nice enough, but bigger and better falls await down the highway.

Between mile markers 9 and 10, you'll come to a pullout on the right with a sign reading KOOLAU FOREST RESERVE. Stop here and stretch your legs on the **Waikamoi Ridge Trail** kids, where there's a short, invigorating loop, good for kids, through a forest of eucalyptus, bamboo, and ginger. If you heed the sign that says QUIET, TREES AT WORK, you may hear the enchanting music the wind plays on the scimitar-shaped leaves of the eucalyptus. You may also hear the distant laughter and cries of people swimming in cold waterfall pools at **Waikamoi Stream,** about a mile down the road. Go there and you'll find a small waterfall just off the highway, and a larger one if you hike upstream a bit. If there's no roadside parking when you get there (this is a popular spot), just keep driving. There are plenty of other falls ahead.

Right past mile marker 12, you'll come to **Kaumahina State Wayside Park,** which has picnic pavilions, restrooms, and a great view up the coast to Keanae Peninsula. At mile marker 17, you'll come to the bluffs above Keanae Peninsula, where you'll also find **YMCA Camp Keanae** (which offers a campsite or a dormitory bunk for $17 per night; see p. 258). Just around the bend from the camp, you'll hit **Keanae Arboretum,** a free, somewhat ratty botanical garden with lots of native plants and some nice trails to stretch your legs on. The road down to **Keanae Peninsula** comes up right after the arboretum. On the peninsula, there's an age-old Hawaiian community, with a patchwork quilt of taro fields, swaying palms, and an old lava-rock-and-coral-mortar church that was built in 1860. It's one of the few old churches around that's usually left unlocked, and it makes a nice stop. But it's even better viewed from the **Keanae Overlook,** just down the road (where you can give the Hawaiians their peace).

Between mile markers 20 and 21, you'll come to **Wailua Overlook.** It peers out over the tiny settlement of Wailua, which has two churches: **St. Gabriel's,** the pink one, and the **"Coral Miracle Church,"** the white and blue one. The legend behind the latter goes like this: In 1860, the men of Wailua were diving for coral

Adjusting Waterfall Expectations in Droughts

It almost always rains along the lush northeastern side of the island that the Hana Highway traverses, but occasionally the weather goes dry. When it does, the larger falls may slow to trickles and smaller falls may dry up entirely. By the same token, when it pours, the falls can gush like nothing you've ever seen.

The Subterranean Hana Coast

If you have time, check out **Maui Cave Adventures** ✯✯✯ (turn left on Ulaino Rd., just after mile marker 31; ☎ 808/248-7308; www.mauicave.com). The cave in which adventures occur is called **Kaeleku Caverns,** one of the most extraordinary natural wonders on the road to Hana. Hawaii has hundreds of lava tubes, former underground expressways for fast-rushing molten lava, but only a few are accessible. This is not only the largest in the state, it's the 18th-largest cavern system in the world. The owner, an enthusiastic spelunker, will take you on a guided tour ($29–$79) or outfit you with a hardhat, headlamp, and a giant flashlight and turn you loose in the cave by yourself ($12). The guided tours range from 1 hour to 2½ hours, and you can do the self-guided tour in about 40 minutes. I think the self-guided tours are more fun. The cave contains a series of chambers and passageways, with the ceiling height varying from 100 feet to 4 feet. The largest chamber is half the size of a football field. Along with all the stalactites and stalagmites are natural features named as if this were a ski run: Bowling Alley, Nina's Bypass, Little Buddha, Chocolate Heart, Claustrophobia Check, Deadend Chimney. Bring something warm to wear, as temperatures inside the cave run from 64°F to 74°F (18°C–23°C). When you're inside, turn off your lights and see what it's like to sit in pure darkness.

to build the church. The coral was in deep water, harvesting it was difficult, and the construction was barely crawling along. Then a freak storm came up and deposited a massive amount of coral onshore, more than enough to finish the church. When construction was complete, another freak storm came and reclaimed the leftovers.

Two great waterfall stops come up next: Just past mile marker 21, you'll see **Waikane Falls,** one of the more voluminous waterfalls along the Hana Highway, and a triple cascade at that. Between mile markers 22 and 23, you'll come to **Puu Kaa State Wayside Park,** which also has a roaring falls, plus a swimming hole and a picnic area.

Further down Ulaino Road from Kaeleku Caverns, you'll find **Piilanihale Heiau** and **Kahanu Gardens** ✯✯ (Ulaino Rd., near mile marker 31 on the Hana Hwy.; ☎ 808/248-8912; Mon–Fri 10am–2pm; $10 adults, free for ages 12 and under). These ethno-botanical gardens surround the largest ancient Hawaiian temple in the state (p. 278).

Shortly before you roll into Hana, just after mile marker 32, you'll come to the turn for **Wainapanapa State Park** (p. 277), a 120-acre park with one of Maui's rare black-sand beaches, set in the back of a deep, protected cove. Wainapanapa's got all sorts of other attractions, as well, including several ancient Hawaiian sites, such as an old graveyard, a segment of the King's Trail (you can hike from here to Hana; see p. 313), and a swim-in lava tube with a periodic bloom of tiny red crustaceans and a curious legend attached (a plaque on-site tells the story, which I won't spoil for you).

Hana is the kind of place that some people love and others hate. It's one of the most Hawaiian places on Maui, and if you're just blasting through in a car, you will always remember it as an utter backwater. But if you take some time there, you can lounge on **Hamoa Beach** or—if you're willing to risk the treacherous hike—on clothing-optional **Red Sand Beach** (p. 277). You can walk along the base of **Kauiki Hill,** out past Hana's crumbling old concrete pier, and visit the cave where Queen Kaahumanu, who shattered the ancient *kapu* system, was born.

You can take a 2-hour kayak and snorkel tour of a reef off Kauiki Hill with **Hana-Maui Sea Sports** (☎ 808/248-7711; gears up at 11am, returns by 2pm; $89). You can spend some time poking around the **Hana Cultural Center and Museum** (497 Uakea Rd.; ☎ 808/248-8622; Mon–Fri 10am–4pm) to get a sense of what daily life was like for Native Hawaiians for centuries before Western contact. You can take a 3-mile hike to **Fagan's Cross** (p. 313), on a lovely hill overlooking the whole town and much of the coast. And you can wander around the exquisitely understated lobby and grounds of the **Hotel Hana Maui** (5031 Hana Hwy.; ☎ 800/321-4262 or 808/248-8211), which has proven that a resort hotel on Maui can have elegance without opulence (it also has rooms starting at $425 per night, proving this place isn't for the budget-minded).

Hana has plenty of reasonably priced accommodations, including **Joe's Place** (4870 Uakea Rd.; ☎ 808/248-7033; www.joesrentals.com), where you can stay for $40 a night (p. 253). Spend a night or two in Hana, approach the place in the right spirit, and you may discover that, backwater or not, it's one of the most interesting places on Maui. If you can't take me up on my good advice and you just tear through town, at least do what everybody else does: Stop at **Hasegawa General Store** (5165 Hana Hwy.; ☎ 808/248-8231) for snacks and an "I Survived the Road to Hana" T-shirt.

Ten miles beyond Hana, you'll come to the **Kipahulu section of Haleakala National Park** (☎ 808/248-7375 for ranger station), one of the doglegs of the park stretching from the summit to the sea. There's no summit access from here, except by foot—and it's a long overnight hike uphill. What draws people here is **Oheo Gulch** and its spectacular series of waterfalls and pools, stepping down, one after another, through a steeply sloped rainforest to the sea. Sometimes the cold, clear mountain water cascading from one pool to the next makes for fantastic swimming. Other times, the pools turn into treacherous muddy torrents that have washed swimmers out to sea. Upslope, the mountain gets more than 300 inches of rain per year, and flash flooding is common. When dangerous weather looms, park rangers shut down the swimming. The other attraction in this part of the park is the hike on **Pipiwai Trail**, which passes several waterfalls before getting to the 400-foot **Waimoku Falls.** There's a $10-per-car park entrance fee at Kipalulu, which you'll pay when you try to park. But if you've been up to the summit of Haleakala in the past week, and you saved your easy-to-lose receipt, you won't have to pay.

A mile past Oheo Gulch, visit the **grave of Charles Lindbergh,** first aviator to fly across the Atlantic Ocean. He retired to Hana, died there in 1974, and is buried at **Palapala Hoomau Congregational Church** (turn left on the road with the sign for the church, just after mile marker 41). From the aeronautic insignia and other little tributes left at his simple, Hawaiian-style grave, it's clear the spot has become a shrine of sorts for modern aviators. It's also a nice place for a picnic.

Most visitors, if they make it this far, turn back at this point and retrace their tracks along the Hana Highway. You can keep going around the backside of Haleakala, but the road has several unpaved sections, the first one of which will void most rental-car contracts, meaning if you break down, you're not entitled to a tow truck. If you go anyway, you'll find a dry, desolately beautiful stretch of coast that most Maui visitors don't see. ***Beware:*** During heavy rains, this road sometimes washes out.

THE OTHER MAUI

If you're curious about the aspects of Maui that visitors rarely encounter, the Maui that locals know and love, this is the section for you. The bulk of visitors tend to cover all of the same ground, see all of the same sites, and do all of the same things in a Maui that has been created especially for them. A separate but parallel Maui exists, where the island's residents live, work, and play—where they train for outrigger canoe races on glassy morning seas, grease up their pompadours and bowl the evening away, and hunt for wild pigs with knives and dogs. As a visitor, a slight effort on your part can yield new insights and possibly new friends.

PRESERVING NATURE IN MAUI

If you'd like to see a wind-swept native cloud forest that's otherwise off-limits, meet some dedicated local conservationists, and help leave Maui a little bit better than you found it, **The Nature Conservancy** (81 Makawao Ave., Makawao, Pukalani Square Shopping Center; ☎ 808/553-5236; http://nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/hawaii/volunteer/) has a job for you: battling invasive species. Work parties meet at the Nature Conservancy offices at 8:45am and spend the day cutting, pulling, and digging up the Kahili ginger and pine that are trying to get a foothold in the otherwise pristine Waikamoi Preserve, up the slopes of Haleakala. The preserve is ordinarily closed to the public, so this is a rare opportunity to see the place. The day involves rugged terrain, high altitudes, and sometimes cold weather and rain, so bring sturdy footwear, long pants, layers of clothing, rain gear, and sunscreen, plus a good attitude, water, and lunch. If you intend to go, call or e-mail the volunteer coordinator, **Pat Bily** (☎ 808/572-7849, ext. 28; pbily@tnc.org).

Here's another way to see something out of the ordinary, do good for the island, and hang with conservationists (without the weeding): Volunteer a day or night with researchers from the **Hawaii Wildlife Fund** (☎ 808/280-8124; www.wildhawaii.org) and, perhaps, see the nest of a hawksbill turtle, the rarest turtle in the Pacific. Most of Hawaii's tiny population of nesting hawksbills (just 5–15 of them reproduce in a given year) prefer to lay their eggs on the Big Island's remote black-sand beaches, but a few favor Maui's powdery white-sand beaches. Dogs, cats, birds, mongoose, crabs, and even the misplaced steps of people threaten the nests, and traffic along the coastal highway threatens hawksbill mothers and hatchlings alike. In the 1990s, two egg-laden females and numerous hatchlings were killed by cars after straying onto North Kihei Road. Hawaii Wildlife Fund volunteers monitor beaches for nesting females, sit watch over their sandy clutches of eggs, and make sure the hatchlings reach the sea safely. They do the same when the more common green sea turtles come ashore to nest, and if an

A Hog-Wild Splurge

For an entirely different way to help the environment—and have a wild, bloody, quintessentially local experience at the same time—you can go on a pig hunt. The first Polynesians to settle in Hawaii brought pigs with them aboard their ocean-voyaging canoes. The Polynesian pigs have since mixed with Eurasian boars, creating a lean, black-tusked, ridge-backed feral breed that runs amok through Hawaii's forests. Their rooting damages native plants and creates breeding grounds for mosquitoes, which carry diseases that threaten native birds.

Local residents have been hunting these little terrors for generations, with the full support of the state and environmental groups like the Sierra Club, which endorses Hawaii's no-bag-limit open season on pigs. Hawaii's pig hunters prefer taking their quarry with dogs and knives, which leaves the pork in better shape than bullets do. The dogs bay the pig, and the hunters finish off the job by hand, with rifles for backup.

Maui Hunting Safari (☎ 808/573-8426; www.mauihuntingsafari.com) will take you pig hunting from sunrise to sunset for $875—not a bad deal for a guided hunt. The fee includes lunch, dogs, and your weapon of choice. If slitting a pig's jugular is too much, you can shoot it and nobody in attendance will think less of you. Up to three guests can go on the hunt, and parents hunting with kids get a 50% discount for the kids. The fee doesn't include the Hawaii State hunters license you need, which costs $105, and which Maui Hunting Safari is authorized to issue, provided you've brought your hunter's safety card from home. For information on licenses and other hunting-related matters in Hawaii, contact the **Department of Land & Natural Resources, Division of Forestry & Wildlife** (☎ 808/587-0166; www.hawaii.gov/dlnr/IdxHunting.htm).

endangered Hawaiian monk seal turns up on a popular beach to sleep in the sun after a night of hunting, Wildlife Fund volunteers make sure nobody disturbs its slumber. Call in advance with your travel plans. Donations are welcome.

MEETING THE PEOPLE OF MAUI

As in most places where tourists outnumber the locals, there are nooks and crannies where the locals go for a bit of their own space. Encroaching on these areas, however, is not verboten. Most Maui residents will welcome anyone imaginative and adventurous enough to venture into Maui's only bowling alley, **Maui Bowling Center** (1976 Vineyard St., Wailuku; ☎ 808/244-4596; open to the public Mon–Fri noon–4:30pm; $2.25 per game, 75¢ for shoe rental). Not only will you find yourself at the clamorous heart of a very local scene, you'll also find a window into half a century of island leisure life. With a few exceptions, such as the vintage 1980s video games (including Pacman and Ms. Pacman), this tiny 10-lane bowling alley has remained virtually unchanged since it opened in the 1950s (as have

some of the hairstyles). If pool is your game, **Family Billiards** (199 Dairy Rd., Kahului; ☎ 808/871-9313; daily 11am–1am; $4.10 per person per table) has a bustling local scene with 14 pool tables, as well as darts, video games, and one-of-a-kind "Family Billiards, Kahului, Maui" T-shirts, for $15. And if you've ever wondered what hula dancers do after work, you can find out for yourself at **Compadres Bar & Grill** (Lahaina Cannery Mall, 1221 Honoapiilani Hwy., Lahaina; ☎ 808/661-7189). That's where the young men and women who perform at the Old Lahaina Luau (p. 327), located just across the street, gather each night around 9:30pm to unwind after the luau wraps up. They all tend to be as friendly and approachable as they are when they're getting paid to be that way.

If you enjoy country fairs—and don't we all, secretly—**Maui County Fair** (War Memorial Complex, Wailuku; ☎ 808/270-7626; www.visitmaui.com) is a great place to talk turkey (or horticulture, or cattle) with the locals. It usually takes place in the last week of September or the first one in October. The same deep-fat fried hot dogs and cotton candy you'll find at mainland fairs sell side by side with local favorites like kalua pig, chow fun, and Portuguese bean soup. You'll see the same livestock and agricultural displays you'd find at mainland fairs, along with local horticultural exhibits featuring anthirium, orchids, and bonsai trees.

SPORTS & EXERCISE WITH THE LOCALS

If you're up for a workout and you're curious about outrigger canoes—the sleek watercraft of ancient Hawaii, built nowadays with modern lightweight materials so they go faster than ever—you can sometimes get a slot paddling with the **Kihei Canoe Club** (meets on the beach around 7:30am, next to the Kihei Beach condominium, south end of North Kihei Rd.; ☎ 808/879-5505; www.kiheicanoeclub.com). When it's not training for races, the club accommodates visitors who drop in during its Tuesday and Thursday morning recreational paddling sessions. A $25 donation is appreciated, and the chances of getting to paddle are hit-or-miss, depending on how many other drop-ins appear and how many experienced steersmen and strokers show up to accommodate them. The canoes hold six, including one steersman and at least one, but sometimes two, experienced strokers. Even if you don't get out on the water, this is still a good place to meet Maui residents with a passion for the sea and impressive upper body strength.

Another way to bask in Maui's fitness culture, and to spend time with flexible, well-toned people who actually live on the island, is to drop in on a yoga class. Maui is crazy for yoga, and it supports about a dozen studios. These include **Maui**

Community Radio

Tune in to **Manao Radio** (91.5 FM) for eclectic shows by volunteer DJs who love music but hate commercial radio, and may or may not have announcing skills. This low-powered community broadcaster has no reception on the farthest-flung parts of the island, like Hana, but with a high-speed Internet connection, you can listen to it anywhere in the world through **www.manaoradio.com**.

Yoga Shala (65 Hana Hwy., Paia; ☎ 808/579-9767; www.maui-yoga.com) in Paia, where you may find yourself practicing ujia breath alongside professional windsurfers and legendary tow-in surfers. Drop-in classes cost $20, and 10-class passes run $170. For better rates, check the schedule for "Community Yoga," where an $8 donation to the Paia Youth & Cultural Center gets you a 90-minute class, twice a week. The owner, Nadia, keeps things sweaty with a blend of Ashtanga and Iyengar yoga. Other instructors lead a variety of yoga and nonyoga classes, including Teen Hip-Hop, Brazilian Samba, and Capoeria, the Afro-Brazilian marshal art.

Despite all the wonderful, funky, independently run yoga studios on the island, my guilty favorite is a franchise in a Lahaina shopping mall called **Bikram Yoga Lahaina** (900 Front St., Suite F17; ☎ 808/250-1220). Not only do you get a highly scripted, copyright protected, 90-minute, 26-posture, incredibly sweaty workout, but if you're a tourist, the director, Mary Kay, will sell you a $50 unlimited weekly pass. Start the day with yoga every day for a week, and not only will you leave the island more limber than when you arrived, you'll also get the best yoga deal on Maui ($7 per session). Otherwise, drop-in classes cost $15. Towels and mats rent for $1 apiece, and big bottles of water sell for $2. You'll probably need two bottles of water.

If you skateboard, or have kids who do, consider packing your board, because Maui has three skate parks. The least attractive of the three is the **Keopuolani Skatepark** (at Keopuolani Park, Kahului; open weekdays 2pm–dark, weekends 11am–dark; no charge; helmets required). It has a big wooden half-pipe and an old-fashioned, not particularly inspired concrete street course with ledges, banks, and rails. The better place to skate in Kihei is the **Kalama Skatepark** (at Kalama Park, Kihei; open daily 7am–9:30pm). It features a wooden half-pipe and a fun mix of wooden ramps and concrete banks, as well as a concrete bowl. But the *best* skate park on the island is the newest one, set on a beautiful north-shore beach in Paia, the **Nalu Pohaku Stone Wave Sk8park** (at the Paia Youth & Cultural Center, Hana Hwy., just west of town; ☎ 808/579-8354; open Tues 3–7pm, Thurs–Sat 3–10pm; $5 admission). It features a series of concrete bowls from 3 to 8 feet deep, and a happy generation of kids whose summers follow a simple schedule: surf, skate, eat, sleep, start over.

For those with an equine bent of mind, the **Maui Polo Club** (☎ 808/877-7744; www.mauipoloclub.com) takes to the fields every Sunday at 1:30pm in the spring and fall. Hawaii's *paniolo* have been riding here since before old Mexico's northern reaches became the new American West, and the level of horsemanship in the islands is high. That, combined with the aristocratic tendencies of the handful of families owning Maui's vast ranches, has resulted in a flourishing polo scene. From April through June, players compete in a small arena with wooden sideboards at the **Manduke Baldwin Polo Field** on Haleakala Ranch (Haleakala Hwy., just past King Kekaulike High School, on the left). From September through November, full-scale games are held at the **Olinda Polo Field** (a mile up Olinda Rd. from Makawao). Admission is $5, and gates open at 12:30am. A big Hawaiian-style party often follows the matches. During the **Oskie Rice Memorial Tournament,** held each Memorial Day, and during the **High Goal Benefit,** on the last Sunday of October, Maui riders pit their considerable skills against players from Argentina, Australia, England, New Zealand, and South Africa.

Another place to find horse people is at a Maui rodeo. With its deep *paniolo* heritage and dozens of working cattle ranches, Maui has no shortage of talented riders. The big event of the year is the **4th of July Makawao Rodeo** (Oskie Rice Memorial Arena, Makawao) organized by the Maui Roping Club. It draws top cowboys and cowgirls from throughout the state and the mainland for barrel racing, calf roping, bull and bronco busting, and all the other fixings of a good rodeo, including a big paniolo parade through the two false-fronted main streets of Makawao. Other big events include the **Oskie Rice Memorial Rodeo,** held the weekend after Labor Day, and the **Cancer Benefit Rodeo,** held in April. Some of the local high schools also hold rodeos. Check the events calendar in the weekly newspaper *Maui Time* for specifics.

MAUI-STYLE WORSHIP

For your best shot at running into a bona-fide bodhisattva, or at least an initiate into the esoteric world of Tibetan Buddhism, visit the **Maui Dharma Center** (81 Baldwin Ave., Paia; www.mauidharmacenter.org). From the outside, this peaceful sanctuary at the edge of Paia town appears to be an unassuming Hawaiian-style plantation house. On the inside, it's pure Himalayan rococo, with gilded Buddhas, silk tonkas, brocaded lanterns, and ornate prayer cushions, plus a couple of big, fat, sleepy temple cats. You're welcome to come by to meditate and pray daily between 6:30 and 7:30am and from 5 to 6pm, and on Thursday and Sunday from 10am to noon. The soft-spoken young Tibetan in silken robes you'll probably see running around is the resident monk, Lama Gyatsen.

For a more American style of worship, with a Hawaiian twist, attend a Sunday service at **Keawalai Congregational Church** (5300 Makena Rd., Makena; ☎ 808/879-5557; www.keawalai.org; services at 7:30 and 10am). Rev. Kealahou Alika conducts the service in both English and Hawaiian, which is fitting as Hawaiians themselves (not missionaries) founded this church in 1832. They started out with a grass hut. The building that stands today, with 3-foot-thick lava-rock walls, was built in 1855. This beautiful seaside church in sunny Makena has an old Hawaiian graveyard with headstones bearing ceramic photos of some of the members of congregations past.

INTELLECTUAL & ARTISTIC MAUI

For those who enjoy, or are driven to create, art, **Hui Noeau Visual Arts Center & School** (2841 Baldwin Ave., Makawao; ☎ 808/572-6560; www.huinoeau.com) holds periodic 1-day art workshops. The topics and instructors change all the time. Past classes have dealt with subjects such as making your own pigments and dyes, painting with watercolors, making beads from precious metal clay, travel sketching, silk painting, glass fusing, and restoring old photographs using Adobe PhotoShop. The cost varies depending on your instructor and the materials needed. Each month, Hui Noeau also offers family classes, for artists ages 4 and up. Call or check the website for details.

For more left-brain-oriented, spoken-word presentations, check out the **AstroTalk Maui public lecture series** (contact Gary Fujihara in Hilo at ☎ 808/932-2328, long distance from Maui; www.ifa.hawaii.edu/hilo). Similar to the original AstroTalk series held on the Big Island (p. 407), AstroTalk Maui features preeminent space scientists drawn to Hawaii by some of the earth's best astronomical

observatories, such as the Faulkes Telescope atop Haleakala. The lectures, held at Maui Community College, are aimed at the general public, which means they're scientific but not overly so. In a recent lecture, titled "The Hitchhikers Guide to the End of Everything," prominent researchers from the University of Hawaii Institute for Astronomy covered killer asteroids, exploding stars, colliding galaxies, and other substantive research topics.

Your best bet for finding Maui's pagans, hippies, disaffected youth, angry Hawaiians, hip-hop artists, nouveau beatniks, bibliophiles, and who-knows-who-else, all under one roof, is at the monthly **Poetry Slam at Maui Booksellers** (105 N. Market St., Wailuku; ☎ 808/244-9091; www.mauibooksellers.com). Take the stage with an original spoken-word piece and you'll get 3 minutes, a randomly selected panel of judges, and $100 if the panel names you the winner. Poetry readings can dull the mind, but poetry slams can be fun, politically charged, erotic, enlightening, energizing, and addictive. Smack in the middle of old downtown Wailuku, Maui Booksellers is a community gathering place with a strong social-justice current running through it. Each Friday, and sometimes Saturday, you'll find something going on here, such as a one-man play, a book reading, or a documentary film. The poetry slam and other events always start at 7pm. Check the website for particulars

On Monday evenings, the poetry slammers convene nearby at **Café Marc Aurel** (28 N. Market St.; ☎ 808/244-0852; www.cafemarcaurel.com) for **Open Mic Night.** Anyone 18 or older is welcome to take the stage, recite verse, bust rhymes, do stand-up comedy, play a ukulele, or whatever. You won't win any cash, but you might earn a heartfelt round of applause. Café Marc Aurel is a coffee bar by morning and a wine bar by night, and it offers a variety of regular events that include an evening dedicated to big tossed green salads and another one given over to belly dancers (p. 334).

ACTIVE MAUI

The number of activities Maui visitors have to choose from can be overwhelming. If you stand in front of one of the giant racks stuffed with flyers, brochures, and handbills about the many things to do, you may feel driven to lay on the beach and do nothing at all. That's not a bad response, and it's something you should certainly do anyway. But if you don't want to spend all your time resting in the sand, here are some suggestions:

SURFING LESSONS

Surfing is one of the most inexpensive ways to have fun ever devised, as thousands of flat-broke surfers all over Hawaii can attest. If you have a surfboard, a bathing suit, and a ride to the beach, you're on. Any kook can paddle into small waves and start learning, but if you've never done it, I *strongly* advise you to take a surfing lesson. A lesson not only cuts down on the time you'll spend floundering around in the soup trying to figure things out, it enhances your safety and that of everyone in the water around you. After all, getting smacked in the head with a heavy board, or worse, accidentally smacking someone else with it, can drain a lot of the fun from the sport.

Most surf schools guarantee that they'll have you surfing—or at least standing momentarily on a board propelled by a wave—with one lesson. From there, it's all about practice, sunscreen, and upper body strength.

Maui has nearly two dozen surf schools, with instruction ranging in price from $50 for group lessons with reputable bargain-level outfits such as **Royal Hawaiian Surf Academy** (117 Prison St., Lahaina; ☎ 808/662-4664; www.tombarefoot.com/maui/royal_hawaiian_surf.html), to $2,350 for a weeklong intensive training camp run by former professional surfer Nancy Emerson, through her **Nancy Emerson School of Surfing** (505 Front St., Suite 224B, Lahaina; ☎ 808/244-7873; www.mauisurfclinics.com). Attending Nancy's camp will undoubtedly help you to become a better surfer, but spending that kind of money to surf seems at odds with the simple barefooted nature of the sport. The soul surfers would say that kind of money would be better spent on new boards or a surf trip to Bali.

Other surf schools on the more affordable end of the spectrum include **Hawaiian Ultimate Adventures** (4242-L Honoapiilani Rd., Lahaina; ☎ 808/669-3720; www.mauifuntours.com), which has group lessons for $55, and **Maui WaveRiders** (meets at 1975 S. Kihei Rd., Kihei, and 545-A Front St., Lahaina; ☎ 808/875-4761; www.mauiwaveriders.com), which offers group lessons for $60 (and kids' lessons for $50). Maui WaveRiders lets its students keep their boards all day to continue practicing when the lesson's over. Both schools, along with the Royal Hawaiian Surf Academy, conduct classes on the reef near the Lahaina Breakwall, and students wear rubber booties so they don't slice up their feet. Maui WaveRiders also holds classes in Kihei at Kalama Park.

Activity Discounters: If It Looks Too Good to be True . . .

Maui is thick with businesses peddling discounts on surf lessons, snorkel tours, luaus, and every other vacation activity. The savings can range from a few bucks to 50% or more. With the bigger discounts, there's almost always a big catch and it usually involves real estate. Nearly all of the activities discounters deal in condominium timeshares and use the discounts as bait. You go in to find out about the $19.99 kayak tour, and you come out with visions of owning a beachfront condominium on Maui for 1 week a year for the rest of your life. My gripe about this is that unsuspecting visitors spend a lot of time in these places comparing tour boats, horseback rides, and whatnot before discovering that they must attend a 90-minute timeshare presentation in order to get the big discount. Even then, they may not qualify financially.

But now that you know the game, you can save yourself time by asking for the discounts without the strings attached. They've got those, too. My favorite discounter is the oddball that doesn't deal in timeshares: **Tom Barefoot's Cashback Tours** ★ (834 Front St., Lahaina; ☎ 888/222-3601; www.tombarefoot.com). The discounts are usually modest, many around 5%, but they can go as high as 20%. Go online to check out all the deals, then call the toll-free number with questions. The website is a great place to compare activities and shop around.

Best Surf Spots for Beginners

Lahaina Breakwall (directly in front of Lahaina Harbor): If the south side of the island is getting any surf at all (south swells come in the summer), this spot will pick it up. The outer break is filled with rippers; the inside break is perfect for beginners.

Launiopoko Beach Park (mile marker 18, Honoapiilani Hwy.): Gentle waves and lots of parking, plus showers and a restroom.

The Cove (South Kihei Rd. just south of Kalama Park): Kihei doesn't get much surf, but this spot gets mushy, easy waves fairly consistently.

Most surfing lessons last 2 hours, which is about how long most people's arms last, if that. Schools also offer private lessons, for around $100, but I think it's better to put the extra money into renting a board and practicing on your own. Board rentals run around $20 per day or $80 per week. Most of the schools rent boards, or you can find a good selection of rental shops such as **Boss Frog's** (150 Lahainaluna Rd.; Lahaina, and other locations; ☎ 888/700-3764 or 808/661-3333) and **Local Motion** (1295 Front St.; Lahaina, and other locations; ☎ 808/661-7873).

WINDSURFING LESSONS

Maui has great surfing, but it's even more renowned for its windsurfing. The island's geographic design, in cooperation with the prevailing northeast trade winds, produce wind conditions that have made the north shore a world-famous windsurfing destination. What happens is that the trade winds stack up against 10,023-foot Haleakala and accelerate as they find their way around it. A 15-knot wind at sea will typically whip across Maui's north shore at 25 knots, and a 25-knot sea breeze will blast by at 35 knots. Summer, fall, and spring are best for dependable wind. North Pacific storm systems can screw things up in the winter.

Kahana Beach Park on the north shore appeals to both seasoned windsurfers and raw neophytes alike. A distant offshore reef gives skilled sailors plenty of waves to jump, while sheltering the inside waters for beginners. An Oahu windsurfer named Alan Cadiz skipped college in the 1980s to turn pro, won several world titles, didn't know what to do afterward, fell into teaching, and now runs the foremost windsurfing school on the island, **Hawaiian Sailboarding Techniques** (425 Koloa St., within Hi-Tech Surf Sports, Kahului; ☎ 800/YOU-JIBE or 808/871-5423; www.hstwindsurfing.com). His 2½-hour introductory classes meet Monday through Saturday at 9am at Kanaha (call ahead). A class costs $79 and includes all gear. More advanced classes cost the same but don't include gear.

Introductory windsurfing students start out on large, stable boards with small, manageable sails. Even so, the windsurfing learning curve is steeper and more daunting than the one beginning surfers face. Some people pick it up more

Pauline Frommer's Hawaii Special

Show this book to Alan Cadiz at **Hawaiian Sailboarding Techniques** (p. 305) and he'll knock 10% off the cost of his introductory windsurfing class for you.

quickly than others. Three factors suggest whether or not you might have the knack: 1) If you can sail a boat; 2) if you've mastered other board sports (such as skateboarding, snowboarding, or wakeboarding); and 3) if you're a kid.

Kids pick up windsurfing quicker than anyone, especially when they're learning with other kids. A great kids program is the series of 3-day summer camps put on by **Maui Sports Unlimited** (☎ 808/280-7060 or 808/575-9449; http://mauisportsunlimited.com). These camps are held every week, through the summer, on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 9am to noon at Kanaha Beach Park. Rash guards, snacks, and equipment are included in the $150 tuition. For an extra $20, there's aftercare until 3:30pm, featuring arts and crafts, hikes, games, and plenty of shade. By the end of camp, most kids can sail out toward the reef, turn 180 degrees, and return to exactly where they started from. It's the rare adult without sailing or boarding experience who can match that. The company also does adult private windsurfing lessons and surfing lessons for $55 per hour.

SNORKELING IN MAUI

Like surfing, snorkeling is some of the cheapest and purest fun you can have in Maui. Get hold of a good-fitting mask, snorkel, and pair of fins and you've got all you need to pleasantly spend hours acquainting yourself with Maui's marine environs and their inhabitants. You can rent snorkeling equipment at most dive shops or beach-gear suppliers. **Boss Frog's** (150 Lahainaluna Rd., Lahaina, and other locations; ☎ 888/700-3764 or 808/661-3333) rents mask-snorkel-fins sets for $5 per day or $20 per week. If you want the gear for more than a week, consider buying your own. At **Wal-Mart** (1011 Pakaula St., Kahului; ☎ 808/871-7820), you can get a full set of snorkeling gear for about $35.

Scores of boats at Lahaina and Maalaea offer trips to offshore snorkeling and dive spots. The best trip is to **Molokini Crater,** a barren half-moon of an island where you'll see thousands of fish in waters with 150-foot visibility. The back wall of the crater plunges straight down 300 feet, and it's a popular, although sharky, scuba-diving area. The protected bay inside the crater is shallower and filled with coral and fish. Snorkeling there is one of the most popular activities on Maui. The state has issued permits for 40 boats to run Molokini tours, and some of them carry up to 150 passengers—which means that the schools of snorkelers can sometimes rival the fish populations. Rates vary, but generally run about $80 for a full-day tour, typically including Molokini and a second stop at a turtle-watching spot. Molokini is best in the morning. Strong afternoon winds reduce visibility, make mooring a rocky affair, and tend to blow snorkelers out to sea. Some boats offer discounted rates as low as $30 for afternoon tours to two sites including Molokini, weather permitting. The catch is the weather rarely permits snorkeling in Molokini in the afternoon, so the boats skip ahead to the second site.

Maui Dive Shop ★★ (1455 S. Kihei Rd., Kihei; ☎ 800/542-3483, ext. 5, or 808/879-1775, ext. 5; www.mauidiveshop.com) offers a Molokini trip that has the most rock-bottom morning rates: $44 for adults and $39 for kids from 4 to 12. These 3-hour tours happen in small boats launched from a boat ramp in Kihei, closer to Molokini than the harbors from which the other tour boats leave. You forgo the lunch buffet, live music, and bars that accompany some of the 150-passenger vessels, but you get to Molokini quicker, earlier, and with just two dozen other snorkelers, rather than 12 dozen. You also get a turtle-watching stop on your way back.

A sensible splurge: The best way to beat the Molokini Crater crowds is to go with one of **Trilogy Excursions'** ★★ kids (P.O. Box 1119, Lahaina; ☎ 888/225-MAUI; www.sailtrilogy.com) two catamarans. They leave at 6:30am from Maalaea, before most of the other boats—with cinnamon rolls, fresh fruit, and coffee—and

A Kiteboarding Splurge

Learning the fundamentals of kiteboarding costs more in both time and money than learning how to windsurf or surf. The gear's expensive and the learning curve's steeper than in windsurfing, but kiteboarding instructors swear that they can teach anyone with dedication, swimming ability, and hand-eye coordination. Just remember: You can't dabble in kiteboarding. You have to commit to it. Some people come to Maui explicitly to learn kiteboarding. For the rest, it's best to just watch.

The **Kitesurfing School of Maui** (22 Hana Hwy., Kahului; ☎ 808/873-0015; www.ksmaui.com), founded in 1999, is the oldest kiteboarding school in the United States. It offers 4-hour private introductory lessons for $290. The first half of the class is spent on the beach, learning to control the kite. Then the class moves into the water, where it usually becomes apparent that the kite's still in charge. According to the school's owner, Martin Kirk, a good athlete needs about 2 to 3 days of instruction—on average—before getting any good boarding time in. The fewer your athletic gifts, the longer it will take. Longer courses, ranging from 2 to 5 days, range in price from $490 to $975. Students can apply anywhere from 20% to 40% of the cost of their lessons to the purchase of new gear.

Maui's other big kiteboarding school is run by **Action Sports Maui** (415A Dairy Rd., Kahului; ☎ 808/871-5857; www.actionsportsmaui.com). Here, an introductory class costs $240 for a 3½-hour lesson, one on one. Longer courses range from a 3-day course for $625 to a 10-day fast-track into the sport for $1,795. If you're serious about going from a novice who can't kiteboard to a novice with some skills, the 10-day class will get you there. Some of the windsurfing schools also offer kiteboarding instruction, including Alan Cadiz's **Hawaiian Sailboarding Techniques** (p. 305), which offers a one-on-one 3½-hour beginners class for $225.

Can I Rent a Kiteboard?

Nope. Nobody rents kiteboarding gear on Maui. You have to buy your own. New gear runs from $1,000 to $2,500. You can save on used gear, and you'll find as much of it on Maui as anywhere.

they don't take more than 40 people. They also have a nice barbecued teriyaki lunch, no alcohol. This 6½-hour day, on a stable boat with a professional crew, is a worthwhile indulgence; it costs $110 for adults, $55 for children ages 3 to 15, but you get a 10% discount if you book online.

If that still sounds a bit pricey, don't worry: Maui's near-shore waters have hundreds of great snorkeling spots that you can explore without cash or credit. They include:

- **Kapalua Beach** in Kapalua, where there's easy ocean entry from a sandy beach, lots of coral near shore, and lava-rock promontories enclosing it all;
- **Black Rock** in Kaanapali, a lava-rock promontory teeming with fish that expect to be fed, and a somewhat secluded cove halfway to the other side, that surprisingly few people explore;
- **Kamaole III Beach Park,** right in the heart of Kihei town;
  Olowalu near Lahaina, which features "a turtle cleaning station," where green sea turtles lay on the bottom and let the cleaner wrasse fish nibble the algae off their shells (but this one's known for sharks);
- **La Perouse Bay** at the end of the road in Makena, an undeveloped natural area reserve and site where lava from Haleakala's most recent eruption reached the sea, and where the arid landscape keeps the waters crystal clear; and
- **Coral Gardens,** a fertile patch of reef abounding in fish, eels, turtles, and so forth, on the way to Lahaina.

KAYAK-AND-SNORKELING TOURS

Another common snorkeling option is to do a kayak-and-snorkel tour. Many kayak operators also offer whale-watching tours between December and April. There are all sorts of kayak tour companies to choose from, and rates vary widely, so it pays to shop around. My favorite kayak company is **Makena Kayak** (☎ 877/879-8426 or 808/879-8426; www.makenakayaks.com), a Native Hawaiian–owned and –operated firm that won't take out more than six people at a time. It charges $55 for a 2½-hour kayak-and-snorkel tour. The two morning tours leave from Makena Landing in south Maui at 7:30am and 8am. Makena Kayak welcomes kids, but if you'd rather not have someone else's kids slowing down the group (you travel at the speed of the slowest paddler), let your preference be known and you'll be scheduled with grown-ups only. For experienced kayakers, there's a 4-hour paddle-and-snorkel trip, with sandwiches, for $85.

Big Kahuna Adventures (2980 S. Kihei Rd., at the Maui Oceanfront Inn; ☎ 877/874-0278 or 808/875-6395; www.bigkahunaadventures.com; $60 adults, $40 kids ages 12 and under) offers 2-hour kayak-and-snorkeling tours. Boats leave from the Maui Oceanfront Inn and paddle to the Four Seasons hotel to snorkel

over a shipwreck. Big Kahuna also rents kayaks from its other shop (1993 S. Kihei Rd.; ☎ 808/875-6395). Rates for single or tandem boats are $40 to $50 per day (24 hr.).

Maui Kayaks (135 Hale Kuai St., Kihei; ☎ 866/771-6284 or 808/874-4000; www.mauikayaks.com) offers various kayak-and-snorkel tours, including its signature tour of the Wailea-Makena area, on which you see great coastline, underwater life, and celebrity homes. A 3-hour tour costs $69; a 5-hour tour—which includes a buffet-style picnic lunch—costs $99. Maui Kayaks also rents boats for 5 days at a time; singles go for $200 and tandems rent for $250.

KAYAK RENTALS

Paying for a kayak tour when you can rent your own seems like an unnecessary expense. But one of the benefits of a guided tour is that the guide will keep you out of trouble. Independent kayakers periodically run into rough waters in Hawaii and need to be rescued. If you have any doubt at all about your abilities, a tour is the way to go. Due to the liability concerns, a surprisingly small number of companies on Maui rent kayaks.

Maui Ocean Activities (on Kaanapali Beach in front of Whalers Village and in front of the Grand Wailea; ☎ 808/667-2001; www.mauiwatersports.com/moahome.html) rents kayaks for $15 per hour for singles, $24 per hour for tandems, and $10 for each additional hour. If you'd prefer sailing over paddling, the company also rents catamarans from the same beaches. A 14-foot Hobie Cat goes for $55 for 1 hour, $135 for 3 hours, and $195 for 5 hours.

JET-SKIING

If paddling and sailing are both too slow for you, try an hour on a jet ski for $95 through **Jet Ski Hawaii** (in front of Whalers Village at Kaanapali Beach; ☎ 808/667-2001). If that's too much time, you can get a half-hour for $60. Up to two passengers can join you for $15 apiece. The company shares office space, a phone number, and owners with Maui Ocean Activities, which rents kayaks. Personally, I find jet skis obnoxious. Quiet, nonpolluting kayaks are a much better way to get out on the water and see the ocean.

PARASAILING

Another way to get out on the water, and high above it at the same time, is to parasail. All day during the spring, summer, and fall, speedboats ply the waters of

A Mask that Fits

The key to happy snorkeling isn't how expensive your gear is, it's how well your mask fits. If the mask leaks water, misery will flow in, too. ***Tip:*** To check the seal of a mask, press it lightly against your face and inhale through your nose. If the vacuum this action creates holds the mask in place, the seal is good. If not, keep testing masks until you find one that stays. Bear in mind that a $12 mask could fit better than a $90 one.

A Free Underwater Guide

Maui Dive Shop (1455 S. Kihei Rd., Kihei, and other locations; ☎ 808/879-3388; www.mauidiveshop.com) has a complimentary dive guide, with maps and descriptions of the island's most popular snorkeling and dive spots, as well as a handy field guide to 47 Hawaiian reef fish plus a zebra moray eel, a snowflake moray eel, and a couple of sea urchins.

west Hawaii, unspooling lines attached to tourists attached to parachutes, then reeling them back in. Traveling either solo or tandem, parasailers can reach heights of up to 900 feet, with no skill required on their part whatsoever. A bag of potatoes could do it. A basic ride lasts just 7 to 10 minutes, but it seems longer when you're up there.

You *might* find the best prices on parasailing at **Parasail Kaanapali** (☎ 808/669-6555), though it's hard to say for sure since this outfit has a complicated and ever-changing price structure that follows tourism's high and low seasons, and sometimes changes on a whim. If you're lucky, you'll catch it charging $45 for a quick unspooling to between 700 and 900 feet, for 6½ minutes or so. Parasail Kaanapali's one boat leaves from the old Mala Wharf, near Cannery Mall in Lahaina, a few miles from Kaanapali.

Maui's two other parasail operators are more predictable and reputable. **UFO Parasail Maui** (☎ 808/661-7836) uses inflatable boats to shuttle passengers to its speedboats waiting off Kaanapali Beach. It charges $56 for a 7-minute ride that hits 400 feet, and $65 for a 10-minute ride that hits 800 feet. If you take the 8am early-bird flight, you'll save $5. **West Maui Parasail** (☎ 808/661-3338) charges $55 for its 400-foot ride, and $62 for its 800-foot ride, both lasting from 8 to 10 minutes. Its early-bird special knocks $7 off of flights during its 8am and 8:30am trips. It leaves from Slip 15 at Lahaina Harbor. All three parasailing operations require reservations.

PARAGLIDING

To scratch the itch for flight in a more unique way than parasailing, consider foot-launched aviation. **Proflyght Paragliding** ★ (☎ 808/874-5433; www.paraglidehawaii.com) offers an introductory lesson in paragliding that includes a tandem flight with the instructor. The flight starts at 6,500 feet in **Polipoli Spring State Recreation Area,** on the steep slopes of Haleakala, where you and the instructor, strapped snuggly together in your paragliding harness, wait for an updraft to stand the paraglider's wing up in the air. Then you both take off running as fast as you can down a wickedly steep slope, and . . . you simply fly away. The flight lasts from 12 to 15 minutes, descends 3,000 feet, and costs $175. There's a budget option, too: For $75 you start lower up the slope and descend just 1,000 feet in a flight that lasts 3 to 5 minutes. You might think that paragliding is an adrenaline rush, but it's actually more of an endorphin high that results in a sense of well-being that can last all day. Proflyght owner Dexter Binder calls this effect "The Perma-grin."

HIKING

Hiking is the land-based equal of snorkeling on Maui. Not only can a good day of hiking be a cheap day of fun, you'll feel more in touch with the island after wandering on it a bit. Rising from sea level to 10,023 feet, Maui has plenty of varied hiking terrain, from the raw, lava desert along the coast at La Perouse Bay, to the cloud forests, pastures, and stands of redwood in upcountry Maui, to the alien landscape inside of Haleakala crater.

Several companies offer guided hikes to waterfalls, through rainforests, and around the Haleakala's crater. They charge between $60 and $160 for the experience, but frankly, I don't see any reason to spend money for something you can do on your own, just as well, for free. The hiking companies would argue that they can take you to secluded waterfalls on private land that you couldn't reach by yourself. Fair enough, but Maui has no shortage of waterfalls with public access, including many that you might have all to yourself if you hike far enough, arrive early enough, or simply get lucky.

If you do want a guided hike, go with the **National Park Service** (for reservations, call ☎ 808/572-4400), which leads regular hikes through the cloud forest at **Waikomoi Preserve**—for free (plus the $10 park entrance fee). The hikes begin every Monday and Thursday at 8:45am from Hosmer Grover, just inside the Crater Road entrance to Haleakala National Park. This moderately difficult

The Tourist Submarine

Another way to visit the deep, but without getting wet, is with **Atlantis Submarines** ★★ kids (658 Front St., Lahaina; ☎ 800/548-6262 or 808/667-2224; www.atlantissubmarines.org/maui.php). The company's 48-passenger sub, which has two rows of bench seating to give everyone a big porthole view, dives to 150 feet and spends 40 to 45 minutes underwater. (The whole tour lasts for an hour and 45 min.) Even if you're a seasoned scuba diver, riding around in what's essentially an underwater tourist tram is something you shouldn't miss—a memorable splurge at $84 for adults and $42 for kids 12 and younger. (***Tip:*** Book online to get 10% off.) You'll typically see lots of fish and coral, and whatever else happens to be in the vicinity when you submerge—sharks, eagle rays, and even, Atlantis claims, the occasional whale.

At press time, the company was working on permits to sink the *Carthaginian II* (a steel-hulled schooner used for years as a whaling museum at Lahaina Harbor until rust rendered it unsafe to board) in 95 feet of water. If they've had success by the time you arrive, you'll see that, too, and possibly scuba divers exploring it. Once the ship is sunk, the sub will move to a new location to dive, reaching a maximum of 130 feet. There's no age limit for kids, but there's a 3-foot minimum height requirement, and all passengers must be able to descend a nearly vertical ladder, then get back up it.

Jet Skis, Speedboats & Whales

Jet skis, speed boats, and all other "thrill craft" are banned from Maui's whale-breeding waters from mid-December to mid-May. If someone tells you they saw whales while parasailing, they're lying.

3-hour, 3-mile round-trip hike takes you through part of east Hawaii's vast rainforest watershed that supplies much of the island's drinking water, and supports some of Hawaii's rarest native plants, birds, and invertebrates. You can't do Waikomoi on your own—the preserve is off-limits to the public except on guided expeditions like this one. But this hike isn't for everyone. Waikomoi's native trees are scrubby, and its views are nonexistent. It takes patience to understand what the landscape has to offer—unless you're a birder or a botanist, in which case, you'll get it immediately.

For an easy hike that you can do on your own or with kids, go to **Hosmer Grove** kids in **Haleakala National Park.** It features an easy half-hour nature walk through an experimental forest of several different temperate-zone varieties of trees mostly planted in 1910 by Ralph Hosmer, aka "Hawaii's Father of Forestry," who had visions of a Hawaiian timber industry in mind. To Hosmer's disappointment, none of the trees turned out to be viable timber species in Hawaii, but his failed experiment had a happy unintended consequence—lovely woods to walk through.

Most of the 30 miles of hiking trails in Haleakala National Park aren't nearly as tame as the trail in Hosmer Grove. Haleakala's crater (which is actually a valley with a collection of genuine craters inside it, but the common usage permits its misidentification) has a network of demanding trails, accessed from two summit area trail heads.

Halemauu Trail ★★★ starts at 7,990 feet and descends to the crater floor at 6,600 feet. For a fairly easy hike, just do the first mile, which takes you down 400 feet, through several ecosystems, to the crater rim. That's about a 2-hour round-trip. If you go all the way to the crater floor, 4 miles away through steep switchbacks, the round-trip takes about 5 hours.

Sliding Sands Trail ★★★ starts at 9,800 feet and descends 3,000 feet on loose cinder to the crater floor. It takes about 6 hours to get down and back. For the best daylong hike, park at Halemauu Trail, hitchhike to the summit (it's legal in the park), descend into the crater on Sliding Sands Trail, and hike back out of it on Halemauu Trail. Allow 6 to 8 hours.

For a strenuous and spectacular climb up the West Maui Mountains, hike **Waihee Ridge** (from Kahekili Hwy., turn *mauka* at Maluhia; turn left at the sign that reads BOY SCOUT CAMP MALUHIA; the trail begins here). The ridgeline trail ascends from 1,000 feet to 2,563 feet. The higher you climb, the more native the forest becomes, which creates the effect of climbing backward in time. At the top you'll find a picnic table. On a clear day, you can see into West Maui's most remote valleys. On an extremely clear day, you can see Pu'u Kukui, the highest point in the West Maui Mountains and one of the rainiest spots on earth. You should expect to spend about 3 to 4 hours hiking up and back.

Between Hana and Wainapanapa State Park runs a 6-mile trail, a remnant of the ancient Hawaiian King's Highway, built 400 years ago by Chief Piilani. The **Hana-Wainapanapa Coast Trail** (park at Wainapanapa State Park) is flat but somewhat challenging for the rocky terrain it traverses. It will take you past a *heiau* and other remnants of ancient Hawaii, as well as a stretch of enchanting coastline along low cliffs lined with inlets, caves, rock bridges, and a blowhole. It gets hot on the lava during midday, so go earlier or later.

In Hana you'll find a good 3-mile hike to **Fagan's Cross,** a lava-rock monument to the wealthy San Francisco industrialist Paul Fagan. In the 1940s, Fagan founded Hana Ranch and brought 300 Hereford cattle in to graze on it. He also founded the Hotel Hana-Maui and brought his millionaire friends to stay at it. Then he created a baseball diamond and brought his minor-league baseball team, the San Francisco Seals, to play on it. All his creations are still there. To reach the cross, cut through the cow pasture across from the Hotel Hana-Maui. It's private property, but the landowner allows access, unless the field is filled with cattle. In that case, find another hike. The hill is steep, but there's a big payoff at the top: a sweeping view of the Hana coastline.

Beyond Hana, above the scenic Oheo Gulch, a popular swimming spot (when not closed by flash-flood conditions), you'll find one of Maui's most popular hikes, the **Pipiwai Trail** (10 miles past Hana, parking lot just after mile marker 42; for trail conditions, call the Kipahulu Ranger Station, ☎ 808/248-7375). It's about a 3-hour round-trip tour along Pipiwai Stream, passing several waterfalls, threading bamboo and guava forests, and ending at spectacular 400-foot Waimoku Falls. Along the way, you'll see an old derrick once used to convey sugar cane across the gulch, and 181-foot Makahiku Falls. You'll also pass the Infinity Pool, a swimming spot at the top of a 200-foot cascade. (Don't even think about getting in if waters are running high or if flash flooding might occur.) This trail is in the Kipahulu section of Haleakala National Park, a finger of federal parkland that reaches down from the summit to the sea. There's a $10 park entrance fee, unless you've already been to the top and kept your pass. Conversely, if you come here first, save your pass and you can get up to the summit later in the week without paying again.

More hiking can be found 6,000 feet up the western slope of Haleakala at the **Polipoli Springs State Recreation Area.** An extensive trail system here runs through forests of redwood, eucalyptus, swamp mahogany, and other unlikely species planted during the Great Depression by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). These hikes are worth the effort it takes to reach them. The trail heads begin at the campgrounds. Start out on the Plum Trail, and do the 5-mile loop, which winds through the woods, past an old CCC cabin, and partly along

Pick Up a Maui Trail Guide

The best resource for finding hiking trails on Maui is *Maui Trailblazer: Where to Hike, Snorkel, Paddle, Surf, Drive,* by Jerry and Janine Sprout. It features more than 100 hikes, with good maps. The watersports sections are good, too.

Prepare Yourself for the Mountain

If you're hiking into Haleakala's crater, bring food, water, sunscreen, warm clothing, and rain gear. The weather can change suddenly and extremely at the summit, where it sometimes snows. Go ready for the worst. Don't tempt the mountain by showing up unprepared.

Haleakala Ridge—the volcano's majestic crest line that runs from the summit to the sea. Along the way, you'll gaze upon sweeping views of Kahoolawe, Lanai, Molokai, and West Maui. Most afternoons, though, the clouds set in, obliterating the views and creating damp, chilly woods that some find mysteriously alluring and others find overwhelmingly lonely. I think it's best to hike here in the early morning, then go spend the afternoon on a sunny beach. It can get really cold here, but there aren't any mosquitoes. Only half of the 10-mile road through the park to the trail heads is paved; the rest of the road is graded dirt and gravel, and, unless you've rented a four-wheel-drive vehicle, you'll probably nullify your rental contract by driving here and free the car-rental agency from its obligation to send a tow truck for you if things go wrong.

THE ZIPLINE

For a peaceful walk through an old upcountry eucalyptus forest, punctuated by moments of adrenaline-laced fun—or screaming terror, depending on your idea of a good time—try the zipline trail of **Skyline Eco Adventures** ✯✯✯ (about 2½ miles up Crater Rd.; ☎ 808/878-8400; www.skylinehawaii.com). Five ziplines run back and forth across a deep, intimidating ravine, with each line growing progressively longer and faster. (A zipline is a steel cable you "zip" across, thanks to gravity and a harness.) There's also a bouncy suspended bridge you must cross at one point along the way. It's a low-tech thrill ride led by enthusiastic young zipline guides who, to make it an eco-adventure, give short talks on natural history between rides. Each zipline run has the name of a native Hawaiian bird species. The first was named for the Hawaiian crow, the *alala,* because *alala* means "scream" in Hawaiian, and that's what people do the first time they step into thin air off a wooden platform perched on the edge of a rugged gulch and zip off to the other side. The whole tour takes between 1½ and 2 hours and costs $79 per person. You can save 15% by booking online, and there's no good reason not to, since reservations are required and they typically book up a week in advance. Riders must be at least 10 years old and weigh between 80 and 260 pounds.

HORSEBACK RIDING

About a dozen outfits on Maui offer horseback-riding tours. One of the most unusual and popular experiences is offered by **Pony Express Tours** ✯✯✯ (2½ miles up Crater Rd., next to Skyline Eco Adventures; ☎ 808/667-2200; www.ponyexpresstours.com). This tour takes riders from the rim of Haleakala to the crater floor 3,200 feet below. The 5-hour ride, which includes lunch, begins at 8:30am and costs $169. A longer full-day ride, for $195, explores more of the

crater, but is for experienced riders only. (Neither ride includes the $10 park entrance fee.) Pony Express also leads rides around Haleakala Ranch, on the lower, 4,000-foot slopes of the volcano. They range from a 1-hour ride for $65 to a 2½-hour ride for $115. You'll save 10% on all rides if you book online.

Piiholo Ranch (at the end of Waiahiwi Rd., Makawao; ☎ 808/357-5544; www.piiholo.com) offers another good horseback ride on the lower slopes of Haleakala, at about 2,000 feet, in small groups of six riders. You pass through pastures and in and out of eucalyptus, ohia, and koa forests, with stunning views of West Maui and the surrounding Pacific along the way. A 2-hour ride costs $120, and a 3½-hour ride with a gourmet picnic lunch costs $160. The countryside is stunning, but be sure you're completely candid about how much horseback-riding experience you have. While signing in, in a moment of hubris, I checked a box that said I had some experience with horses, when in fact I should have checked the box that said I had none. The horse I was assigned, Frank, made me pay for my little white lie for 2 solid hours.

BIKING ON MAUI

One of the single most popular visitor activities on Maui, and one that annoys Maui residents like no other, is the long downhill bike ride from the summit of Haleakala to the sea. Several competing outfits haul sleepy visitors to the 10,023-foot summit in the early morning, put them on fat-tired bikes with heavy-duty brakes and wide seats, and then lead them in groups back down to sea level. The van that picked everybody up (at their hotels, condos, or, in one case, at a Kahului Starbucks) tails the caravan, carrying first-aid supplies and the layers of clothing riders shed as they descend from the freezing summit back into more tropical weather. All of the companies charge about $120 for the sunrise rides and about $100 for rides that leave later in the morning.

Warning: Although thousands of people coast from the summit to sea level each year, and most of them reach the bottom in one piece, serious wipeouts occur periodically. It can be quite a scary ride if you're not an experienced biker. Also, you should know that Maui residents who have to commute on upcountry roads hate the traffic-slowing effect of large groups of tourists on bikes, and would love it if the activity were wiped out forever from the vacation activities list.

You can usually find substantial discounts on these bike rides by booking through an activity discounter, such as **Tom Barefoot's Cashback Tours** (834 Front St., Lahaina; ☎ 888/222-3601; www.tombarefoot.com). You can also save money by taking an abbreviated tour. For $60, **Maui Riders** (3619 Baldwin Ave., Pukalani; ☎ 808/573-2320) offers a 21-mile summit ride (compared to the 38-mile full trip) that ends at Sunrise Market and Flower Farm in Kula.

Free Maps

Free detailed hiking maps of the trails in Haleakala National Park are available at any of the park's visitor centers.

The Home Time-Zone Advantage

The best time to visit the summit of Haleakala in order to see the sunrise—whether you're riding a bike back down or not—is shortly after you arrive on the island, while you're still accustomed to an earlier time zone.

Another way to save money on the Haleakala downhill ride is to forego the guide and the chase van and go it alone. But you should do this only if you have total confidence in your biking skills. **Haleakala Bike Company** (Haiku Marketplace, 810 Haiku Rd.; ☎ 888/922-2453 or 808/575-9575; www.bikemaui.com) will give you a bike and a ride to the summit, then let you find your own way back, for $75 to $85, depending on what time you go. It also offers an abbreviated self-guided tour, in which it drops you off at the entrance to Haleakala National Park, at 6,500 feet, rather than at the summit, and lets you take off from there, for $55.

For an alternative budget option, rent a bike (Haleakala Bike Company rents its downhill cruisers for $30 a day or $120 a week) and find your own way to the summit. Mountain bikes go for $45 to $65 per day or $140 to $160 per week. Road bikes rent for $65 a day or $160 per week. Each bike comes with a repair kit, wind and rain gear, a backpack to carry it in, a helmet, and a car rack. Bikes are due back the next day by 5pm.

In Kahului, near the airport, **The Island Biker** (415 Dairy Rd.; ☎ 808/877-7744; www.islandbikermaui.com) rents road bikes for $40 per day or $140 per week, and mountain bikes for $35 per day, $125 per week, and $20 per day thereafter. Car racks run an extra $5 per day.

If you just want to bum around on a fat-tired, wide-seated beach cruiser, **South Maui Bicycles** (1993 S. Kihei Rd., Kihei; ☎ 808/874-0068) has them for $22 per day or $99 per week, including lock and helmet. Road bikes go for $30 to $50 per day or $130 to $150 per week, including patch kit, saddle bags, and helmet. In Lahaina, **West Maui Cycles** (1987 Limahana Place; ☎ 808/661-9005; www.westmauicycles.com) offers even better rates on cruisers: $15 per day or $60 per week. Road bikes rent for $50 per day or $200 per week, while mountain bikes go for $40 to $50 per day or $160 to $200 per week. Bicycles built for two rent for $50 to $60 per day or $160 to $200 per week, in both road-bike and mountain-bike styles.

Warning: Some hard-core bicyclists pack their bike shoes and pedals and bike all over Maui (a hearty few come specifically to climb Haleakala—the ultimate way to save money on a Haleakala downhill bike ride). But Maui lacks a good system of bike paths and has no lack of drivers oblivious to bicyclists, which makes bicycling an unappealing means of traveling long distances on Maui. Please don't try to use bikes as your main transportation mode unless you are a *very* experienced biker.

TENNIS

If tennis is your game, and you're staying in a condo, you may very well have access to a free tennis court. You'll also find free public courts at a dozen county

parks, including five courts at **Lahaina Civic Center** (1840 Honoapiilani Hwy., Lahaina), four courts at **Kalama Park** (1910 S. Kihei Rd., Kihei), and four courts at **Waipulani Tennis Courts** (Waipulani St., Kihei, behind Maui Sunset condominium). First come, first served.

At the **Wailea Tennis Club** (131 Wailea Ike Place; ☎ 808/879-1958; www.waileatennis.com), you'll find 10 lovely courts among the rolling golf courses of the ritzy Wailea Resort. Singles can get an hour of court time for $12, and doubles can get an hour and a half for the same price. Both come with free play afterward if you can find an open court. Resort guests get a discount, and every two paying players can bring along one player 12 or younger for free. The club rents rackets, shoes, and ball hoppers for $7 each, and a ball machine for $35 per hour, including the court. Adult and advance clinics, as well as stamina drills set to music, are offered 6 days a week, for $20 to $35.

In West Maui, at the **Kapalua Tennis Garden** (100 Kapalua Dr., Kapalua; ☎ 808/669-5677; www.kapaluamaui.com), you'll find 10 gorgeous courts on a terraced hillside next to the Ritz-Carlton hotel. At $16 per person for the day, the court fees are steeper than those of the Wailea Tennis Club, but the rentals are mostly cheaper: rackets are $6, shoes are $3, ball hoppers are $8, and ball machines are $30 per hour. A fun and affordable option here is to show up for drop-in tennis, a round-robin-like event where you compete with a variety of other players at your skill level. Drop-in tennis costs just $8 and takes place on Monday and Wednesday from 4 to 6pm, on Saturday from 8 to 11am, and on Sunday from 10am until noon.

MAUI GOLF

Maui has 16 golf courses, most of which are championship courses. Greens fees on Maui range from $26 at the Waiehu Municipal Golf Course to $225 at The Plantation Course at the Kapalua Resort, with rates dropping in the afternoon (see the "Golf Deals" sidebar, below).

The Courses

Pukalani Country Club (360 Pukalani St., Pukalani; ☎ 808/572-1314; www.pukalanigolf.com) is an 18-hole, par-72, 6,962-yard public course where you can escape from the high greens fees of the resort courses. Located 1,100 feet up the slopes of Haleakala, you'll need a sweater on chilly mornings here. Rates are $60 for 18

Free Road Tour

For hard-core road riders, a free group ride leaves from The Island Biker (p. 316) parking lot every Thursday and Saturday at 7am. Where and how far it goes depends on the wind and the speed of the group, which tends to be pretty fast. This is not a tourist activity. It's an opportunity for serious gearheads to rack up mileage on a 2-hour ride that returns by 9am sharp, so the store's owner, Bob, can open the shop. And it's BYOB—bring your own bike.

County Courts

For the complete list of Maui County parks with tennis courts—where you can play for free—go to www.co.maui.hi.us/youth/maui/athletics/tennis.htm. For more information, call the **Parks & Recreation Department** (☎ 808/270-7383).

holes before 11am, $55 from 11am to 2pm, and $45 after 2pm. Check the website for discounts; the club offers various specials on its website. Nine holes cost $35.

You'll find the best deal for Maui golf at one of the local golfers' favorite spots, **Waiehu Municipal Golf Course** (Halewai View Rd.; ☎ 808/270-7400), an 18-hole, par-72, 6,330-yard municipal course, with more ocean-side holes than on all of Maui's other courses combined. What this historic course (the first 9 holes date back to the late 1920s) lacks in modern maintenance equipment, it makes up for in character and affordability. It's an easy course with difficult winds. Rates are $26 for the first 9 holes if you walk (it's allowed here). Otherwise, add $8 for the cart.

You can play a handful of other courses for under $100, including the 6,649-yard, par-72 **Kahili Golf Course** (2500 Honoapiilani Hwy., Wailuku; ☎ 808/242-4653). It sits among the sandalwood trees on the side of the West Maui Mountains, and features sloping fairways, strong trade winds, and plenty of local and state tournaments. Rates are $80, except after 2pm when they're $50.

For just under $100, try **The Dunes at Maui Lani** (1333 Mauilani Pkwy., Kahului; ☎ 808/873-0422; www.dunesatmauilani.com). The only Maui course built on sand dunes (and ancient, noncoastal ones, at that), this is the only one where sand traps are part of the natural terrain. The Irish linksland-style course requires more thought than brawn. Rates are $98, or $60 after 2pm.

The **Elleair Maui Golf Club** (1345 Piilani Hwy., Kihei; ☎ 808/874-0777) is South Maui's only public course. It has ocean views from most of the greens, and many holes bring the wind into play. This course has something for players of every handicap. Rates are $100, or $80 after 1pm.

Makena Golf Club (5415 Makena Alanui Rd., Makena; ☎ 808/879-3344; www.makenagolf.com) features two 18-hole courses. The 6,914-yard, par-72 **North Course** travels up and down the green slopes of Haleakala, around and through ancient Hawaiian rock walls, gullies, gulches, streambeds, and lava flows, as it climbs from sea level to 800 feet. The **South Course** sticks around sea level, and offers the only oceanfront greens in South Maui. North Course rates are $170, or $95 after 1pm. South Course rates are $180, or $105 after 1pm.

The **Kaanapali Golf Courses** (Kaanapali Beach Resort; ☎ 808/661-3691; www.kaanapali-golf.com) features two choices: the wide bunkers, long tees, and convoluted greens of the par-72, 6,305-yard **Tournament North Course,** and the par-72, 6,250-yard **Resort South Course,** which is rated a couple of strokes easier despite its big water hazard on the final hole. Tournament North Course rates are $160, or $77 after 2pm. South Course rates are $130, or $65 after 2pm. Online deals are available.

Kapalua Golf Club (Kapalua Resort; ☎ 877/527-2582; www.kapaluamaui.com/golf) has three courses: the Arnold Palmer–designed, par-70, 6,317-yard **The Kapalua Village Course,** which rises from near sea level to 800 feet in the first 6 holes; **The Bay Course,** a par-72, 6,600-yard course with gently rolling fairways and ample greens; and **The Plantation Course,** site of the PGA Tour Mercedes Championships every January. Village Course rates are $180, or $80 at twilight; Bay Course rates are $190, or $85 at twilight; and Plantation Course rates are $225, or $90 at twilight.

The **Wailea Resort** (100 Wailea Gold Club Dr.; ☎ 888/328-MAUI; www.waileagolf.com) has another three courses. The **Wailea Emerald Course,** a 6,825-yard, par-72 course, was ranked by *Golf for Women* magazine among the top 10 "Friendliest in the Nation." The par-72 **Wailea Gold Course** measures 7,700 yards, and its fairways are framed by lava rock, kiawe forest, tall indigenous Hawaiian grasses, and ancient Hawaiian rock walls. **Wailea Blue Course** has generous fairways, and large fast greens that appeal to a broad range of players. Blue Course rates are $185; Emerald and Gold courses are $190. Discounts are offered during the May-through-October "value season."

Miniature Golf

For golf on a smaller scale, you can play 18 phosphorescent holes at **Glow Putt Mini Golf** (Lahaina Center, 900 Front St.; ☎ 808/667-2010; Mon–Sat 11am–11pm, Sun noon–10pm). In the heart of old Lahaina town, it's got heavy air-conditioning, prizes for holes-in-one, and golf balls that glow in the dark. It also offers group discounts and birthday packages. Otherwise, it's $7 for the first

Golf Deals

For the best bargains on golf, consider:

Last-Minute Tee Times. Call **Stand-by Golf** (☎ 888/645-BOOK; www.stand-bygolf.com) to get discounts of $10 to $40 off standard rates. Stand-by Golf works with 8 of Maui's 16 courses. Call between 7am and noon for same-day golf, or between 5:30 and 9:30pm for next-day golf.

Twilight Rates. As the trade winds pick up in the afternoon, greens fees fall—sometimes by as much as 50%. You won't necessarily have enough daylight to play 18 holes, but you'll be out there swinging. On golf courses, "twilight" starts in early or midafternoon.

Playing Off Season. The resort courses typically raise their rates $10 or more during peak tourist season, which generally runs from the week before Christmas until early May. You'll save some money by planning your trip in the off season.

Package Deals. Stay at one of Maui's exclusive resort hotels or condominiums, and you'll get a substantial discount off their courses.

Wine & Nine

A box of crackers, a wheel of cheese, and a bottle of wine combined with 9 holes of golf is what you get with Kaanapali Golf Courses' **Wine & Nine Special** (☎ 808/661-3691; reservations required), at the Tournament North Course after 4pm. For $135, you and another player get this Robert Trent Jones, Sr.–designed course largely to yourselves (since not that many serious golfers care to play in the afternoon winds). This could be a reasonable splurge for a couple with one golfer and one nongolfer, or for the couple in which both parties care nothing for the game but want to do something fun and different. When you're done, you get to keep the well-made cooler bag that the wine and cheese and crackers came in, the acrylic wineglasses, the cutting board emblazoned with the Kaanapali Golf Courses logo, the corkscrew, the cheese spreader, and any golf balls you haven't lost.

round and $5 for subsequent rounds. For children 5 and under, it's $5. And everybody gets a glowing bracelet.

Maui Golf & Sports Park (kids) (80 Maalaea Rd.; ☎ 808/242-7818; daily 10am–10pm) features two outdoor 18-hole miniature golf courses, as well as bumper boats, a two-story rock-climbing pillar, and a bungee trampoline. The golf courses both cut through a cave in a pretend volcano. Golf costs $13 for adults and $10 for children ages 4 to 12; tickets for the other activities run $8 for adults and $6 for children. A package with 18 holes of golf and tickets for any three activities (such as bumper boats, rock climbing, and bungee trampoline) costs $23 for adults and $20 for children.

ATTENTION, SHOPPERS!

Shopping abounds on Maui. In between the cheap and the absurdly expensive is a vast retail universe, stretching from the "I Got Lei'd on Maui" T-shirts on Front Street in Lahaina to a $7,000 Louis Vuitton handbag at The Shops in Wailea. For the discerning, budget-oriented shopper, rich finds await among the wide variety of Maui-made gifts and souvenirs. It's easy to zero in on the Maui-made stuff. The chamber of commerce has devised a "Made-in-Maui" seal, and it's affixed to the food, clothing, flowers, soaps, lotions, potions, and whatnot of more than 70 local companies. Pahoa berry jam, turbinado sugar packets, macadamia-nut-flavored cigars, macadamia-nut cookies, mumus and other dresses, aloha shirts, Hawaiian-music CDs, hand-carved boxes and bowls, and artwork of all sorts and prices are among the wares.

Kihei and **Lahaina** are filled with small gift shops and souvenir stands, hawking Made-in-Maui items side by side with faux Hawaiian trinkets made in Malaysia or the Philippines. **Kahului** has box stores galore and two big shopping malls, while neighboring **Wailuku** has an old downtown shopping district with an eclectic mix of antiques stores, pawn shops, and other mom-and-pop operations. **Paia** has a colorful collection of small shops and fun boutiques, while **upcountry** has galleries in Makawao and all sorts of agricultural operations with

gift shops throughout the rest of the area. The resorts have resort-area shops with resort-area prices.

KAHULUI

Kahului's box stores—such as **Wal-Mart** (1011 Pakaula St.; ☎ 808/871-7820), **Kmart** (424 Dairy Rd.; ☎ 808/871-8553), and **Costco** (540 Haleakala Hwy.; ☎ 808/877-5421)—line the route from the airport to the sunny beaches of West and South Maui. While your vision of the ideal Maui shopping experience might not include the likes of Wal-Mart, the one in Kahului actually has a great souvenir section with pretty good prices. Likewise, **Borders** (Maui Marketplace, 270 Dairy Rd.; ☎ 808/877-6160) has a fantastic Hawaiian-music section and a broad selection of books on Hawaii. Many visitors staying in condos, and saving on food by cooking for themselves, head straight from the airport to Costco or **Safeway** (170 E. Kamehameha Ave.; ☎ 808/877-3377) to stock up on provisions.

Kahului's two major malls sit on the route to neighboring Wailuku. With approximately 50 shops and department stores, **Queen Kaahumanu Center** (275 Kaahumanu Ave.; ☎ 808/877-4325) offers something for everyone, residents and visitors alike. Plus on Friday, a great **farmers market** (9am–5pm) sets up in the parking lot. If you visit the Queen K, you must go to **Maui Hands** (☎ 808/877-0638; also at 3620 Baldwin Ave., Makawao; ☎ 808/572-5194; and 612 Front St., Lahaina; ☎ 808/667-9898), a consignment shop that sells prints, paintings, carvings, pottery, jewelry, hardwood bowls, and all sorts of other locally crafted, handmade things.

At the **Maui Mall** (70 E. Kaahumanu Ave.; ☎ 808/872-4320), you'll find coins, clothing, crystals, nail care, and cellphones, among other wares. You'll also find guri-guri, a delicious cross between ice cream and sherbet, at **Tasaka Guri Guri Shop** (☎ 808/871-4513), Hawaii's most famous purveyor of the cold treat. As lore has it, guri-guri was originally called "goodie-goodie" when it was sold to Japanese workers in the plantation days, but the workers' pronunciation stuck. The Maui Mall is the island's original shopping center, newly renovated, and anchored by **Longs Drugs Store,** where you can buy practically anything.

Every Saturday, the **Maui Swap Meet** (S. Puunene Ave., next to the Kahului Post Office; ☎ 808/877-3100; 7am–noon; admission 50¢) opens its gate to some

Buy Practically Anything at Longs

Longs Drug Store is Maui's latter-day general store, where you can pick up sunscreen, film, fishing poles, prescriptions, beach towels, beer, sunglasses, magazines, eggs, onions, insecticides, and so on. Longs also has an especially well-stocked section of Made-in-Maui gifts and souvenirs.

You'll find three Longs in Maui: 1) **at Longs Drugs Kihei Center** (1215 S. Kihei Rd., Kihei; ☎ 808/879-2259); 2) at the **Lahaina Cannery Mall** (1221 Honoapiilani Hwy., Lahaina; ☎ 808/667-4384); and 3) at the **Maui Mall** (70 E. Kaahumanu Ave., Kahului; ☎ 808/877-0041).

of the most fertile bargain-hunting grounds on the island. Among all the T-shirts, CDs, sarongs, homemade cookies, carpet remnants, plate lunches, paperbacks, DVDs, flowers, fruit cakes, license plates, rusty tools, vintage postcards, and Makawao mushrooms, you're sure to find something you weren't expecting. I scored imitation Maui Jim sunglasses for $5.

WAILUKU

Wailuku, once the island's retail capital, has long since been eclipsed by its younger, sprawling neighbor, Kahului. But the shopping in Wailuku merely changed, it didn't die. Wailuku's old downtown has an assortment of locally owned stores selling art, antiques, books, music, leather, trophies, jewelry, aloha shirts, and other stuff that people typically hawk at pawn shops. And they're all concentrated around North Market Street, within walking distance of each other.

If you're shopping in Wailuku, don't miss the gift shop at **Bailey House Museum** (2375A Main St.; ☎ 808/244-3326), which is filled with books, wooden bowls, and other high-quality goods. It's one of Maui's best gift shops, and the museum is worth a look, too. It's got the island's best collection of ancient Hawaiian and missionary-era artifacts.

KIHEI

Kihei—a 7-mile strip of shopping plazas and condominiums—doesn't have a downtown. Its closest approximation to a town center is Kalama Park, a 36-acre beach park with a life-size whale sculpture that everyone refers to as "The Big Whale." Across the street from The Big Whale is **Kihei Kalama Village** (1913 S. Kihei Rd.), a collection of bars, restaurants, shops, and souvenir stands that you should poke around in if you're in the market for bric-a-brac. Check out **Cary's of Maui** (☎ 808/891-2117), where the goods range from vanilla-macadamia-nut-flavored cigars to ukuleles. The latter start at $20 for a souvenir-grade uke and climb quickly to $480 for a fine, handmade koa instrument.

Down the road a few blocks at another souvenir bazaar, **Aloha Marketplace** (1794 S. Kihei Rd.), you can get an even cheaper ukulele for $12. You may never get it perfectly tuned, but if you really knew how to play, you wouldn't want one like this anyway. Aloha Marketplace is a smaller assembly of T-shirt and trinket vendors than Kihei Kalama Village, but you'll find all the touristy basics here, such as grass skirts with coconut-shell bras ($8.95 for the adult size, $9.95 extra-large). This is also one of the places where you can pick up a Mail-a-Nut. A twist on the traditional postcard, it's a coconut with a Hawaiian scene painted on it, and space set aside for postage, an address, and a message, which you write with a magic marker. The smallest Mail-a-Nut costs about $10 and the largest costs about $20. Postage adds an extra $4 to $15.

LAHAINA

Most retail in Lahaina is concentrated in two locations: the historic district and an old pineapple cannery transformed into a shopping mall called **Lahaina Cannery Mall** (1221 Honoapiilani Hwy.). The town of Lahaina is long on T-shirt shops, art galleries, jewelry stores, and activity discounters peddling timeshares, but short on stores with originality, bargains, or much appeal. Many of the most

interesting shops started elsewhere, then opened a store in the area—or, in the case of **Crazy Shirts** (865 Front St., ☎ 808/661-4775; Whalers Village, ☎ 808/661-0117; Lahaina Cannery Mall, ☎ 808/661-4788; and Wharf Cinema Center Shops, ☎ 808/661-4712), opened four stores in the area.

Crazy Shirts started in Honolulu in 1964 when the first baby boomers were hitting college and starting to dabble with T-shirts as a form of self-expression. Early designs tended toward surf-company logos ("Surfboards Hawaii"), drug and alcohol references ("Suck 'Em Up"), and political statements, sometimes mixed with drug or alcohol references ("Draft Beer Not Students"). Shirts today start at $23 and come with a broad assortment of messages and images, many of them related to Hawaii. But if quantity rather than quality drives your T-shirt buying, skip Crazy Shirts and browse the shops and stands along Front Street, where you'll find shirts for less than $12. There's a wide variety, but the higher-quality Crazy Shirts T-shirts will last longer.

PAIA

Groovy little Paia on the north shore has Maui's most interesting assortment of unique, locally owned boutiques, shops, and galleries. The shopping scene, combined with the town's fantastic restaurants and the nearby world-renowned windsurfing beach, Hookipa, make Paia a place where you'll want to spend at least a couple of hours.

Many of the more interesting shops in Lahaina started here, then expanded. The surf shop **Maui Tropix** (90 Hana Hwy., Paia; ☎ 808/579-9861) was born in Paia and now also has locations in Lahaina (786 Front St.; ☎ 808/661-9296) and Kahului (261 Dairy Rd.; ☎ 808/871-8726). Maui Tropix's owner is a surfer and artist who designs the Hawaiian patterns adorning a wide assortment of short- and long-sleeve T-shirts ($19–$29) that are popular among Hawaiian locals. He's constantly coining new slogans, too, and releasing them into the world. His "It's All About Me" line has been spreading lately, in the form of T-shirts and bumper stickers, and "Slow Down, This Ain't the Mainland," is a perennial bumper-sticker favorite.

Maui's Best Bikini Boutique

The best bikini store on Maui, and possibly in Hawaii, is **Maui Girl & Co.** (12 Baldwin Ave.; ☎ 800/579-9266), a small beachwear boutique with some 4,000 mix-and-match tops and bottoms in stock, and, when I was there, a half-dozen women going mad over them. Styles range from modest to quite the contrary, with a heavy Brazilian influence. Some of the Brazilian surfers who make the winter big-wave pilgrimage to Maui pack their suitcases filled with the latest swimwear from Rio, which finds its way onto Maui Girl's racks. Maui Girl's owner swipes what she likes and re-creates it under the Maui Girl label. "I see what's really hot, and then make a zillion of them," she says. Prices start at about $30 for a separate and go way up. Call to find out about sales, which sometimes knock prices down by 50%.

Go to **Hemp House** (16 Baldwin Ave., Paia; ☎ 808/579-8880; www.hemphousemaui.com) and you'll come away with the strong suspicion that anything can be made from hemp. Not only is this shop full of casual hemp wear for men and women (hemp tops, hemp bottoms, hemp boxers, hemp hoodies), and hemp accessories (hemp hats, hemp handbags), it's also got a surprising assortment of hemp bath and body products (hemp soaps, hemp massage oils, hemp moisturizers, hemp shampoos, hemp conditioners), as well as hemp pet products (hemp leashes, hemp collars, hemp cat food, hemp doggie bones), miscellaneous hemp items (hemp candles, hemp incense), and hemp educational materials (a hemp T-shirt filled with hemp facts, such as: "Ben Franklin owned a mill that made hemp paper" and "Henry Ford made a hemp car that would not smash with a sledgehammer"). Hemp prices run from $3.95 for hemp lip balm, to $45 for a men's hemp hoodie, to $65 for women's hemp beach pants. I like the optimistic slogan about hemp's durability: "It doesn't wear out, it wears in."

UPCOUNTRY

For a cowboy town, Makawao sure has a lot of arts and crafts. Galleries displaying the works of wood turners, painters, potters, and other artists and artisans line the town's two Old West–style streets. For budget shoppers, most of these galleries offer little more than browsing—with a few exceptions. At **Hot Island Glass** (3620 Baldwin Ave.; ☎ 808/572-4527), you can watch as glassblowers mold and inflate molten glass into vases, bowls, and sea creatures. A big jellyfish sculpture here might cost upward of $6,000, but you can also pick up a colorful glass paperweight or a shallow glass bowl for around $15.

Deeper into upcountry, you can visit a lavender farm, **Alii Kula Lavender** ✦✦ (1100 Waipoli Rd., Kula; ☎ 808/878-3004; www.aliikulalavender.com; daily 9am–4pm), which has a gift shop filled with an assortment of goods made from the lavender grown on-site. Lavender is in everything here: lavender bath gel, lavender body butter, lavender bubble bath, lavender body spritzer, lavender coffee (regular and decaf), lavender shortbread cookies, lavender herb dressing, lavender honey, lavender jelly, lavender essential oil, lavender candles, lavender-scented note cards, and a satin eye pillow filled with lavender. Most lavender items are reasonably priced, between $10 and $25. The farm also offers lavender tours of the lavender grounds, which include a light lavender lunch (lavender herb–seasoned chicken with lavender rolls; $55) or tea (lavender, of course; $30). Call ☎ 808/878-8090 for reservations. The best time to visit is during the summer, when the fields are in full lavender bloom.

More so than lavender, upcountry is famous for protea, the strange and beautiful flower of the tropical African shrub with the same name. Several farms specialize in protea, which ships well fresh and dries out beautifully. Check out **Proteas of Hawaii** (417 Mauna Place, Kula; ☎ 808/878-2533; www.proteasofhawaii.com). Prices start at $1 a stem and go up to $100 for shipping a large basket to the mainland via FedEx. You can order by phone, but it's better to go in person so you can explore the University of Hawaii's protea garden (7:30am–3:30pm; free) across the street.

For Maui-grown coffee, stop at **Grandma's Coffee House** (Kula Hwy., Keokea; ☎ 808/878-2140), a small deli and organic-coffee roaster. When people think of Hawaiian coffee, the Kona district of the Big Island is the first thing that usually

Maui Wines & Cheese

You can find bottles of wine from Maui's only winery at liquor stores around the island, but it's more fun to buy it where it's produced. **Tedeschi Vineyards** (Kula Hwy., 5 miles south of Grandma's Coffee House in Keokea; ☎ 877/878-6058 or 808/878-6058; tasting room open 9am–5pm daily; www.mauiwine.com) is on the historic grounds of Ulupalakua Ranch. At the tasting room, in a guesthouse constructed for King Kalakaua, you can sample a table wine, a blush, two pineapple wines, and three sparkling wines. I had low expectations for the pineapple wines, but they weren't nearly as bad as I anticipated. Still, I chose the Ulupalakua Red, and left with a nice bottle of it for $10, as well as a handsome canvas wine tote for $12 (which, together, made a nice gift with a few bars of organic chocolate thrown in). Wines range from $9 for the blush to $18 for a sparkling variety. Try to arrive in time for one of the free tours of the vineyards, held daily at 10:30am and 1:30pm. The grounds are beautiful.

Yet another upcountry spot with products unique to Maui is **Surfing Goat Dairy** (3651 Omaopio Rd., Kula; ☎ 808/878-2870; Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 10am–2pm), whose resident ruminants are responsible for more than 20 gourmet cheeses. Try the aged Maui goat cheese with jalapenos, Thai dragon chilies, Buddha's Hand citron, and Malabar peppercorns in olive oil with garlic ($10 per 8-oz. jar). Or pick up some of the fresh chèvre, which comes plain or with additions such as apple, bananas, curry, tuna and wasabi, or Maui lavender (there's no limit to what lavender can mix with in upcountry Maui).

springs to mind. But coffee flourishes in other parts of Hawaii, too, including upcountry. Like pure Kona coffee, pure upcountry coffee comes with a premium price: $35 for 10 ounces of Grandma's brand. But you can get away with a 10-ounce blend for just $11. If you're lucky, you'll walk in when they've got the ancient roaster fired up and the transcendent aroma of coffee fills the store.

RESORT SHOPPING

You can safely skip the outrageously expensive and dull shops at both **Whalers Village** in Kaanapali and the Kapalua Shops in Kapalua. But the **Shops at Wailea** (3750 Wailea Alanui Dr.; ☎ 808/891-6770) is worth a look. You won't find many bargains among the 60-plus upscale stores, galleries, and restaurants at this enormous, high-toned outdoor mall, but browsing is pleasant enough and parking is free. Mixed in with the same old high-end resort-area designer outlets (such as Louis Vuitton and Prada) are a bunch of fun, locally owned places. The **Célébritiés Fine Art Gallery** (☎ 808/875-6565) displays artwork either by or about celebrities, with an emphasis on baby-boomer favorites like Ronnie Wood, John Lennon, Miles Davis, David Bowie, and even Paul Stanley of KISS—all of whom, as it turns out, are visual artists as well as musical ones. Jerry Garcia, who

lived for a spell in Lahaina, did a psychedelic-colored painting of a banyan tree. The gallery attendant told me that, while there's no proof, she's certain it's a portrait of the famous banyan at Lahaina Banyan Tree Park. It didn't look like it to me, but I can understand how at a place like Célébritiés, the idea of a celebrity artist doing a portrait of a celebrity tree is irresistible.

Another fun store in the mall is **Enchantress** (☎ 808/891-6360), which describes itself as a "beautiful, romantic goddess boutique." It sells the kind of loose, flowing, ruffled things that a celebrity like Stevie Nicks might wear. When I offered this observation to the shopkeeper, she told me that, in fact, Stevie Nicks had recently been to the original **Enchantress in Paia** (23 Baldwin Ave; ☎ 808/579-6360), where she bought five loose, flowing, ruffled Azima silk coats.

NIGHTLIFE ON MAUI

From a sandy-floored beach bar with cover bands and dollar mai tais to a symphony hall filled with Tchaikovsky or Gershwin, to a luau stage covered with smiling hula girls and flaming fire-knife dancers, Maui's nightlife ranges across diverse terrain. Most of it is concentrated along the island's west and south shores, where most of the visitors are concentrated. The dinner shows, the sunset cruises, and the majority of bars and clubs are found along the coastal strips running from Wailea to Maalaea, and from Lahaina to Kaanapali. Less extensive but no less intriguing after-dark scenes also occur in Wailuku and Kahului, in Paia on the north shore, and even in Makawao, on the cool, upcountry slopes of Haleakala.

To check out all the possibilities, pick up a Thursday edition of the ***Maui News*** and read its ***Maui Scene*** insert, which has the week's entertainment schedule. Or save the 50¢ and grab the free alternative weekly, ***Maui Time,*** which also lists the week's happenings.

SUNSET CRUISES

Many of the same boats that offer snorkeling and whale-watching tours also offer sunset cruises. In the evening, large and small power craft and sailing vessels take 25 to 150 passengers offshore to watch the Maui sun slip beneath the horizon. Most cruises last 2 hours and depart from either Lahaina or Maalaea harbors, with a few sailing catamarans leaving from Kaanapali Beach. The cocktail cruises generally cost around $50, and they're the best deal. Not only do they include open bars, but you can fill up on pupus, too. The dinner cruises add another $30 or so to the ticket—and that money is better spent on dinner served closer to the kitchen. Every activity discounter on the island handles sunset cruises, so it's easy to find deals. For more information, check out www.tombarefoot.com.

Note: With any boat tour in Hawaii—snorkeling trips, whale-watching, and sunset cruises—be prepared to also pay the state's 4% general excise tax, as well as an additional charge to cover the 3% harbor fee.

Here's a sunset-cruise sampler that illustrates the variety of what's out there:

Pacific Whale Foundation (Lahaina Harbor, slip 10; ☎ 808/249-8811) carries 40 passengers aboard a 50-foot, double-decked sailing catamaran on cocktail cruises ($50), and 100 people aboard its 65-foot double-decked motor cat on dinner cruises ($80) in waters off Lahaina.

America II **Sailing Charters** ★★★ (Lahaina Harbor, slip 6; ☎ 808/667-2195; www.galaxymall.com/stores/americaii) offers a rare opportunity to sail aboard one

of the most highly pedigreed racing yachts on the planet—and for one of the most affordable sunset-cruise rates ($37). This is the same 65-foot, $10-million *America II* that represented the United States in the 1987 America's Cup Challenge. No alcohol is served, but you may bring your own beer (in cans), if you like. This vessel heels heavily under sail and you should be prepared to get soaking wet. Morning and afternoon cruises are offered for the same price as the sunset cruise.

The Pride of Maui (Maalaea Harbor, main loading dock; ☎ 808/242-0955 or 808/244-2100), a 65-foot motor catamaran, packs 110 people onto its sunset cruises ($50) and plies the waters of Maalaea Bay or travels along rocky Pali coastline toward Lahaina, depending on weather conditions and the captain's inclination.

EXPERIENCING A LUAU

For many visitors, a trip to Hawaii wouldn't be complete without a luau. This power of the luau over the tourist perplexes many residents, who can't understand why anybody would spend $75 (the typical luau price) for a hotel buffet, an inauthentic and not particularly good hula, and a sunset. They point out that sunsets are free, plate-lunch joints sell heaps of Hawaiian food for $10, and not only are the hula dancers at luaus notoriously out of sync, they're not even doing hula half the time, considering all the Tahitian, Samoan, and other Pacific dance forms thrown into the mix.

But don't worry what the luau bashers think. If you want to do a luau—and you're not put off by the ticket price—by all means, do a luau. Just forget about the ones offered by the resort hotels and go to **Old Lahaina Luau** (1251 Front St., Lahaina; across from Cannery Mall; ☎ 808/667-1998; www.oldlahainaluau.com; events typically begin at 5:45pm, but times vary, so call for details). This place has its own 1-acre oceanfront luau grounds done up like a Hawaiian village that's laced with pathways, thatched *hales,* and native plants. It's staffed with genuinely enthusiastic hosts and hostesses, bartenders, servers, and dancers (it's one of the most coveted service-industry jobs on the island, so everybody's pretty happy to be here). The food is several cuts above what you'd scoop out of the sorry hotel

Slack-Key Guitar & Stories

For an equally entertaining but more authentic Hawaiian cultural experience than a luau—and a less pricey one—check out the **Masters of Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar Concert Series** (Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua; ☎ 888/669-3858 or 808/669-3858; Wed at 6 and 8pm Jan–Mar, 7:30pm Apr–Dec; $40; www.slackkey.com). Hosted by George Kahumoku, Jr., a slack-key master and storyteller of considerable gifts, this series features a changing roster of guest musicians from the highest ranks of the Hawaiian music industry. Somehow, the 120-seat theater and its resort setting melt away, leaving the impression that you're hanging with Kahumoku and his friends in a garage as they drink beer, talk story, and crack jokes between songs.

Hawaii's History Dramatized

The lavish stage show ***Ulalena*** ✦ (Lahaina Myth and Magic Theatre, 878 Front St., Lahaina; ☎ 877/688-4800 or 808/661-9913; www.mauitheatre.com; Tues–Sat 6:30–7:45pm; $48 adults, $28 children 12 and younger) takes a sweeping spin through 1,500 years of Hawaii's history and culture. It moves from the area's mythological origins, when the demigod Maui fished the islands from the sea with his magic fish hook, to the beginning of the cultural renaissance in the 1970s, when disaffected young Hawaiians began turning to the past like never before. The story is told with traditional hula and modern choreography, with dancers sprinting through the aisles, musicians appearing where you don't expect them, drumming, chanting, acrobatics, and mesmerizing stage effects that include a goddess dancing on the moon and a lava flow that engulfs the entire theater.

The entire presentation unfolds without a word of dialogue, but with refreshments in the lobby, including beer. If you go, and you should, you must study the playbill beforehand to familiarize yourself with the characters. Otherwise you'll have no idea that the lusty swine in one hilarious scene, for instance, is the pig god, Kamapuaa, and the lady with the crazy hair he's trying to seduce is the volcano goddess, Madame Pele. An even better way to ensure you don't get lost along the way is to buy the $10 souvenir program guide, which has color photos of who's who. My only objection to *Ulalena* is Captain Cook. It's fine to hold up Cook as proxy for Western civilization, enticing the wide-eyed natives with baubles, finery, and musketry. But portraying him as a flighty fop (played by a woman, no less) seems like an unnecessary affront to a great, if controversial, explorer.

trays at some luaus (at this one, be sure to try the pulehu steak, the mahimahi, and the chicken long rice), and the open bar turns out skillful and generous concoctions. Unlike the Polynesian reviews typical of hotel luaus, which include dance from throughout the Pacific and offer an excuse to include fire-knife dancers (that's a Samoan thing, not a Hawaiian one), the dance at Old Hawaiian Luau is strictly hula. (The dancers may not always be in sync, but if I hadn't pointed it out, you probably wouldn't have noticed.) Seating for Old Lahaina Luau fills up well in advance, so make reservations as early as possible. This is not only the best luau on the island, it's the best in the state.

If you can't accept the idea of a luau without a fire-knife dancer, the same company that does Old Lahaina Luau also presents **The Feast at Lele** (505 Front St., Lahaina; ☎ 808/667-5353 or 866/244-5353; www.feastatlele.com; reservations required), which has grafted fine dining onto the trunk of a conventional luau. You're still greeted at the door with a lei and a mai tai, but instead of family-style seating, you're seated at a private, tablecloth-draped table. As the sun sets, a server brings the first of four main courses to your table and dancers take the stage. They move through four styles of Polynesian dance—Hawaiian, Tahitian, New Zealand, and Samoan—with each dance accompanied by a gourmet treatment of the region's cuisine. This is a smaller, more intimate seaside setting than the mass

feeds at most luaus. Unlike Old Lahaina Luau, it's got a fire-knife dancer. At $99 a head ($69 for children 12 and under), this is Maui's premium-priced luau—but it's worth the splurge if a memorable haute-cuisine luau is the Hawaiian experience you have your heart set on.

Through discounters (such as www.tombarefoot.com), you can easily get $10 off luau tickets at the resort hotels, but you won't find Feast at Lele or Old Lahaina Luau discounted. The demand for these luaus is too high. If you're willing to forgo the food (which isn't necessarily a bad idea), you can just watch the show (with fire-knife dancers) at **The Royal Lahaina Luau** (2780 Kekaa Dr., Kaanapali; ☎ 808/661-3611; www.royallahainaluau.org) for $37.

PERFORMING ARTS IN MAUI

If listening to Gershwin or Tchaikovsky is your idea of a good time, check the online schedule for the **Maui Arts & Cultural Center** (1 Cameron Way, Kahului; ☎ 808/242-7469; www.mauiarts.org). Home to the **Maui Symphony Orchestra,** this $32-million entertainment complex perched on a hill overlooking Kahului Bay is the envy of performing-arts communities on all the other Hawaiian islands. In addition to the symphony, the MACC hosts a rich and diverse variety of shows, which have included big-name rock bands, touring Broadway musicals and dance troupes, local stand-up comedians, and Hawaiian cultural performances. It also presents a weekly film series. While waiting for the show to begin, you can sip a beer outside the theater in the softly lit CandleLight Café.

Also, at the Maui Arts & Cultural Center you might catch a touring Broadway show in the 1,200-seat main theater, a major rock concert in the outdoor amphitheater, or a homegrown stand-up comic in the intimate black-box theater. Something is almost always going on at the MACC, even if it's only a good movie. The center also has a cafe where audiences like to gather before and after the shows. Go online before you get to Maui and find out who will be performing while you're on the island. If you're staying for a while, you can save 20% on prices by getting tickets for six shows at a time.

If you'd like to catch some homegrown Maui theater, check the online schedule for the island's community theater group, **Maui Onstage** (☎ 808/244-8680 or 808/242-6969; www.mauionstage.com). Based at the **Iao Theater** (68 N. Market

The Maui Film Festival

The **Maui Film Festival** (☎ 808/572-3456 for recorded info; www.mauifilmfestival.com) is two things: 1) an ongoing Wednesday-night screening of critically acclaimed films at the Maui Arts & Cultural Center in Kahului, and 2) a weeklong summer festival at the Wailea Resort, with celebrity soirees, haute cuisine, five screens, 50 or 60 films, and a growing buzz. The best screen is the Celestial Cinema, set up under the stars on a driving range, with the imposing outline of Haleakala framing the screen and the ocean at your back. It's like being at a drive-in movie theater, with a really good movie showing, without any cars around, and on Maui.

St., Wailuku), a lovely old Art Deco building, the group stages productions ranging from locally written plays in pidgin English to Broadway standards including *Hair,* with its brief nudity and all.

BARS & CLUBS

In South Maui

When night falls upon the well-manicured, well-mannered Wailea Resort, quiet settles in—with one notable exception: **Mulligan's on the Blue** ★★★ (100 Kaukahi St., on the Wailea Blue golf course; ☎ 808/874-1131; www.mulliganson theblue.com). The live music, dancing, perfect pints of Guinness, and noisy, young crowd that packs into this unlikely Irish pub on a golf course in the middle of the North Pacific gives the place, when you first approach it, a surreal quality, as if it were a nighttime mirage on the fairway. But it's all real and a lot of fun. There's contemporary Irish and Celtic music on the weekends, jazz on Monday, Latin on Tuesday, and rock 'n' roll on Wednesday. Thursday and Friday are Wailea Nights (reservations required; 8pm showtime; $50), which involve a three-course meal accompanied by two of Hawaii's top musicians, Bary Flanagan (of the acclaimed duo HAPA) and Eric Gilliom (a movie actor and celebrated Hawaiian musician). If the meal is too much, you can watch the show without eating for $15. Or you can sit at the bar, outside of the curtain, and listen for free.

If you're going out at night in Kihei, you can't—and shouldn't—miss the cluster of bars across the street from The Big Whale sculpture in Kalama Park. The proper name for the place is **Kihei Kalama Village** (1913 S. Kihei Rd.), and it's a souvenir bazaar during the day. At night, I think of it as **"Bar Land"** because each bar has a different theme, giving the whole conglomeration the feel of a theme park for drinkers. The cornerstone bar, which sits prominently on the corner of North Kihei Road and Keala Place, is **Life's a Beach** ★★ (☎ 808/891-8010), a bar with neon palms on the walls and real sand on the floors. It draws a young crowd partial to shots of Jägermeister and chilled Patron, and loud, live music (rock, reggae, Hawaiian, and cover bands) every night but Sunday (which is loud, live karaoke night) and Monday (which is open-mic night). I strongly recommend the mai tais here, and so do the readers of the weekly newspaper *Maui Time,* which awarded Life's a Beach the Best Mai Tai award in reader polls. Go during happy hour (4–7pm) and get a small one for $1, a big one for $2, or a really big one (1 liter) for $6.

The ambience, prices, and patrons shift suddenly, just one door down, at **Tastings Wine Bar & Grill** (☎ 808/879-8711). Here you'll find classical music, soft lighting, quiet conversation, and $9 glasses of wine. Needless to say, there's

Cover Charges

Cover charges at Maui's various bars and clubs with DJs or live music range from $2 to $3 during the week (if there's a cover at all), and from $5 to $10 on weekends, unless a band with a big name is playing and the price goes even higher.

Maui's Favorite Entertainer

Immensely popular and wildly talented, Hawaiian singer, songwriter, and musician **Willie K** ★★★ flat out rocks. He plays Hawaiian music, jazz, salsa, country, and whatever else he chooses equally well. Everyone on Maui seems to love Willie K, and he hasn't gone unnoticed by the rest of the world. He's sat in with or opened for the likes of B.B. King, Santana, Prince, Bonnie Raitt, Jimmy Buffet, Willie Nelson, and Crosby, Stills and Nash, not to mention the halftime show he performed at on *Monday Night Football*. Monday is Willie K Night at **Hapa's Brew Haus** (p. 332; show is $8), and it's not to be missed.

not a lot of foot traffic between Tastings and Life's a Beach. Or between Tastings and its other closest neighbor, **Neptune's Martini Bar & Music Lounge** (☎ 808/874-2555). Neptune's is a small black box filled with throw pillows, animal prints, a low-slung sofa, lots of velvet, and the obligatory lava lamp. The place is a bit seedy and so tiny you can size up the entire crowd from the door. A variety of different live bands squeeze in here Wednesday through Saturday. Drink specials include $2 cocktails from 6 to 9pm.

Nearby, the **South Shore Tiki Lounge** (☎ 808/874-6444) has a big outdoor deck and dance floor with nightly entertainment. Live traditional and contemporary Hawaiian music accompanies the 4-to-6pm happy hour (during which beer, well drinks, and house margaritas are $3), and a variety of bands and DJs takes over from 10pm until 1:15am (last call). As you might expect in a Tiki bar, you'll find fruity drinks served in Tiki mugs with umbrellas and pineapple spears, lots of bamboo, grimacing Tikis, and blazing Tiki torches. The black-velvet Elvis, the puffer-fish lampshades, the flat-screen TV with surf videos, and the menu that includes pizza ($3.50 per slice, $1 per topping) are all bonuses.

The next bar over is **Kahale's Beach Club** (☎ 808/875-7711), which has a theme I find hard to pin down. A friend described it as a "roadhouse" bar. Whatever it is, it draws an older crowd than Life's a Beach, and one more inclined to denim and leather. The nightly live music here tends toward oldies, rock, and Hawaiian. Kahale's boasts of having "The Happiest and Longest Happy Hour" on Maui (10am–5:30pm), which is really another way of saying, "Drink prices go up at night."

The largest bar in Bar Land is **Lu Lu's** (☎ 808/879-9944), an open-air, second-story tropical lanai, with a young, loud crowd, a dance floor, dart boards, pool tables, and other amusements, plus an extensive pub menu (don't be fooled by the bucket of fries, though—the big galvanized pail has a false bottom). Live bands play or DJs spin Thursday through Saturday from 8 to 11pm. Wednesday is karaoke night during the same hours.

The most unlikely theme in Bar Land is at **Bada Bings** (☎ 808/875-0188), a family-style Italian place with a small bar tucked inside. The theme is Frank Sinatra. Sinatra photos, Sinatra posters, and Sinatra record jackets cover the walls from floor to ceiling. This place bills itself as "Home of the $10 Wine List," and

indeed you can get a carafe of various whites and reds for $10. If you order the signature dish, "One Big Meatball" (a half-pound meatball in marinara, $10), you'll probably need at least one carafe to wash it down.

Besides Bar Land, Kihei has the nightclub with the island's most consistent lineup of entertainment: **Hapa's Brew Haus** (41 E. Lipoa St., Kihei; ☎ 808/879-9001). This black cave of a venue showcases heavy drapery on the walls, tiered seating, a roomy dance floor, and a big stage with a brass pole and cage. The stage attracts visiting DJs, underground hip-hop artists, big-name recording artists, Hawaiian and reggae bands, and the odd punk or metal show. Monday nights belong to Maui's most popular local musician, Willie K, while techno infuses Ultra Fab Tuesdays (aka gay night), and anybody with skin ink gets in free on Thursday, Tattoo Night. When school isn't in session, Sunday becomes Teen Night.

A short bar-hop away from Hapa's, beneath a neon martini sign in the same Kihei shopping plaza, is **Henry's Bar & Grill** (41 E. Lipoa St., Kihei; ☎ 808/879-2849), which is just seedy enough to be loveable. This fun, local haunt with pool tables has enough secondhand cigarette smoke to keep anyone sensitive to such things hopping on their way to the next bar. Live bands jam Thursday through Saturday, after 9pm.

The Kihei location of **Sansei Seafood Restaurant and Sushi Bar** (Kihei Town Center, 1881 S. Kihei Rd.; ☎ 808/879-0004) always attracts a thick crowd of residents and visitors for its late-night discounts (50% off sushi and appetizers 10pm–1am Thurs–Sat) and its laser karaoke (I never realized it before I went to Sansei, but karaoke machines change pitch so the music matches the vocal range of the singer!). **Sansei's Kapalua location** (The Shops at Kapalua, 115 By Dr.; ☎ 808/669-6286) also has karaoke and late-night specials, but the crowd is a little mellower.

In West Maui

Bar Land in Kihei notwithstanding, the best place to bar-hop on Maui without a car (and that's the only way to do it) is along Front Street in Lahaina, which is lined with restaurants, bars, live-music venues, and dancing. Front Street is always pretty lively, but never more so than on Friday (with the exception of Halloween, when Lahaina becomes "The Mardi Gras of the Pacific"). Friday is **Art Night in Lahaina** (7–9pm), when the downtown galleries whip up enthusiasm and foot traffic with live music, free pupus, and appearances by some artists. A map of the participants is available at any of the galleries or at the Lahaina Visitors Center in the Old Lahaina Courthouse building at Banyan Tree Park. But it's easy enough to just stroll through Lahaina on a Friday evening and discover the places all by yourself.

Maui's Smoking Law

Maui County has banned smoking in restaurants, but bars and nightclubs are off the hook. Some bars have taken it upon themselves to prohibit smoking indoors, while others have designated smoking areas. Still, it's not hard to find an old-fashioned, smoke-filled bar on Maui.

Eating Late in Lahaina

The best place to get a late-night bite to eat in Lahaina is **Lahaina Coolers** (180 Dickenson St.; ☎ 808/661-7082), which serves dinner until midnight. All the restaurant staffers seem to gather after hours. Prices range from $11 for pupus to $28 for filet mignon.

Among Lahaina hot spots is **Moose McGillycuddy's** (844 Front St.; ☎ 808/667-7758), a popular meat-market-type place with a dance floor and a second-story location overlooking the foot and vehicular traffic on Front Street. It's got a varying schedule of live music and DJs, with no regular cover charge except on Tuesday, when it's $5 and drinks are $1 from 9pm to 1am.

Located in an alleyway off Front Street, past big bouncers, and down a flight of basement stairs painted like piano keys, is another big Lahaina nightspot, **Paradice Bluz Nightclub & Lounge** (744 Front St.; ☎ 808/667-5299; paradicebluz.com). It features live music or a DJ each night, dancing, black leather couches, white leather booths, a cigar humidor, and a designated smoking area for burning its contents. There's a dress code (no beachwear) and a $5 to $10 cover charge every night except Tuesday, when there's no cover and bikini tops will pass.

For good microbrewed beer, in a cool, dimly lit, dark-wood-paneled setting, drive north of Lahaina to the Kahana Gateway Shopping Mall and grab a bar stool at the **Fish & Game Brewing Co. & Rotisserie** (4405 Honoapiilani Hwy.; ☎ 808/669-3474; www.mauibrewingco.com). This restaurant and nominal sports bar is also a microbrewery that creates its own beers in small, seven-barrel batches. The beer lineup changes, but try the Double Overhead IPA if it's available. It's smooth, hoppy, and strong, with a name that plays off both its 4-month fermentation process (rather than the normal 2 months) and a system that surfers use to measure wave heights.

In Upcountry

In the cool, sleepy upcountry town of Makawao, **Casanova's Italian Restaurant & Deli** (1188 Makawao Ave.; ☎ 808/572-0220; www.casanovamaui.com) goes through an unusual evolution each day. It starts out as a casual coffeehouse and deli in the mornings and afternoons. At dinner, it turns into a reasonably priced, family-oriented Italian place. After the tables are cleared and the children packed off to bed, it cranks up the music, draws in the late-night crowd, and turns into one of Maui's hippest, most intimate nightclubs. Makawao's proximity to Paia, the international crossroads for windsurfers, ensures that Casanova's crowd always has a tanned, toned, European flavor to it with no particular allegiance to the current time zone. Casanova's Wild Wahine Wednesdays is Maui's undisputed champion of ladies' nights. Friday nights are when the salsa, samba, and *ritmo latino* drive the dance floor. On Saturday, live bands take the stage.

On the North Shore

In Paia town, **Charley P. Woofer Saloon** (142 Hana Hwy.; ☎ 808/579-9453) undergoes a similar daily transmutation, starting the day as a breakfast place

where cops, windsurfers, and Hana-bound tourists enjoy oversize pancakes and eggs Benedict. It serves lunch and dinner through the rest of the day, then puts on its honky-tonk pants, cracks open the beer, and cranks up the country-western. This being Hawaii, it also cranks up the reggae, the rock, and the contemporary Hawaiian. Everyone will tell you that this is the place you're most likely to see Willie Nelson, who lives around here and who's a close friend of the owner. And even if you miss Willie, you'll see his gold and platinum records, displayed on the wall opposite the long bar.

A few steps from Charley's, you'll find the epicenter of north-shore nightlife: **Jacques Northshore Bistro** ★ (120 Hana Hwy., Paia; ☎ 808/579-8844). This is where all the windsurfers, kiteboarders, and movie stars in Paia go. Lit by torches and tucked behind bamboo fencing, with outdoor seating under a big-top canopy ceiling, Jacques has a DJ on Friday and live bands on Saturday around 9pm, after the kitchen and the sushi bar close. Jacque's globe-trotting, windsurfing French-chef namesake created this place in his own eclectic, fun-loving image.

Central Maui

Meanwhile, in Wailuku, the hippest nightspot in town is **Café Marc Aurel** (28 N. Market St.; ☎ 808/244-0852; Mon–Sat 4–9pm or later; www.cafemarcaurel.com). After starting out as an Internet cafe and coffee bar, it has grown up into a wine bar, too (starting at 4pm), with more than 80 wines by the glass ($5 and up), as well as gourmet cheeses and port. Marc, the young owner, has a laid-back manner and a forgiving attitude toward patrons who order a wine they don't like. "My

The Sly Mongoose

Lahaina's Front Street has some rowdy, divey bars, like Moose McGillycuddy's, but it doesn't have any true dive bars—places that serve canned beer and potato chips, and where regulars show up with casserole dishes of beef stroganoff to share because they know they're going to stay a while. There's only one place like that left in Lahaina: **The Sly Mongoose** ★ (1036 Limahana Place; ☎ 808/661-8097). Hidden away on a back street on the *mauka* side of Honoapiilani Highway, the Sly Mongoose elicits either affection or derision, depending on who's talking about it. When a friend and I sought directions from a young mainland transplant working at a Front Street activities kiosk, he warned us to stay away from the place or we'd probably get beaten up. We went anyway and stayed far longer than we intended. When we finally tore ourselves away, we took with us a Sly Mongoose baseball cap, a Sly Mongoose woman's tank top, a half-dozen Sly Mongoose bumper stickers, two good beer buzzes, and the life stories of several Sly Mongoose regulars, including the bartender, all of whom had become our new friends, and none of whom even once suggested we fight. We probably could have had some beef stroganoff, too, but the regulars ate it all before we got there.

Free Shows at Kaanapali

If you know where to look, you'll find plenty of free evening entertainment around the Kaanapali Resort. At **Whalers Village** (2435 Kaanapali Pkwy.), two beachfront restaurant-bars have musicians whom anyone walking by or hanging out on the grass outside can see and hear perfectly well. Don't feel badly about enjoying the music for free—lots of people do it, and nobody minds. At the **Hula Grill** (☎ 808/667-6636), musicians take the stage daily from 3 to 5pm and 6:30 to 9pm. At **Leilani's on the Beach** (☎ 808/661-4495), performances take place Tuesday through Sunday from 2:30 to 6pm. Pick whichever act sounds best, plop down outside, and enjoy the free show. I'd especially recommend going at sunset. For hula, stroll north along the beach walk fronting the hotels until you reach the **Kaanapali Beach Hotel** (2525 Kaanapali Pkwy., Lahaina; ☎ 800/262-8450 or 808/661-0011; www.kbhmaui.com), which brings out dancers every night from 6:30 to 7:30pm to entertain whoever cares to attend, free of charge. The music starts at 6pm and lasts until 9pm. If you continue north to the end of the beach walk, you'll come to Black Rock, aka Puu Kekaa, where the **Sheraton Maui Resort** (2605 Kaanapali Pkwy.; ☎ 808/661-0031) has been holding a sunset torch lighting and cliff-diving ceremony every evening for the last 3 decades, for free.

motto is if you don't like it, that's okay—I'll drink it and bring you something else," he says cheerfully. Monday is open-mic night, Tuesday is salad night (Marc's mom makes extravagant salads), Wednesdays are wine tastings ($35, call for reservations), Thursdays are reserved for live jazz or blues, and Saturdays are for live music or belly dancing.

ABCs of Maui

American Express Offices are located in South Maui at the **Grand Wailea Resort** (☎ 808/875-4526), and in West Maui at the **Westin Maui** at Kaanapali Beach (☎ 808/661-7155).

Dentists Emergency dental care is available at **Kihei Dental Center,** 1847 S. Kihei Rd., Kihei (☎ 808/874-8401), or in Lahaina at the **Aloha Lahaina Dentists,** 134 Luakini St. (in the Maui Medical Group Building), Lahaina (☎ 808/661-4005).

Doctors **West Maui Healthcare Center,** Whalers Village, 2435 Kaanapali Pkwy., Suite H-7 (near Leilani's Restaurant), Kaanapali (☎ 808/667-9721; fax 808/661-1584), is open 365 days a year until 10pm nightly; no appointment is necessary. In Kihei call **Urgent Care Maui,** 1325 S. Kihei Rd., Suite 103 (at Lipoa St., across from Star Market; ☎ 808/879-7781), which is open daily from 6am to midnight.

Emergencies Call ☎ **911** for police, fire, and ambulance service. District stations are located in Lahaina (☎ 808/661-4441) and in Hana (☎ 808/248-8311).

Hospitals In Central Maui, **Maui Memorial Hospital** is at 221 Mahalani, Wailuku

(☎ 808/244-9056). East Maui's **Hana Medical Center** is on Hana Highway (☎ 808/248-8924). In upcountry Maui, **Kula Hospital** is at 204 Kula Hwy., Kula (☎ 808/878-1221).

Post Office To find the nearest post office, call ☎ 800/ASK-USPS. In Lahaina, there are branches at the Lahaina Civic Center, 1760 Honoapiilani Hwy., and at the Lahaina Shopping Center, 132 Papalaua St. In Kahului, there's a branch at 138 S. Puunene Ave.; and in Kihei, there's one at 1254 S. Kihei Rd.

Weather For the current weather, call ☎ 808/871-5054; for Haleakala National Park weather, call ☎ 808/572-9306; for marine weather and surf and wave conditions, call ☎ 808/877-3477.

7 Hawaii: The Big Island

With black sand and red-hot lava, the Big Island is bigger than all the other Hawaiian islands combined—and still growing.

by David Thompson

I have a friend on the Big Island who lives near the spot where an old palm grove once grew on the edge of a black-sand beach. In 1990, a lava flow burned the trees and buried the black sand, creating a raw new coastline where the beach used to be. My friend had a crying rock out there where she liked to sit when things weren't going well. She once took me to see it, and we found that an enormous fissure had opened up along the shore, threatening to dump the crying rock and a huge slice of the land it sat on into the pounding surf.

That's how the Big Island is: sometimes beautiful, sometimes menacing, and always on the verge of change.

DON'T LEAVE THE BIG ISLAND WITHOUT . . .

Visiting a volcano. Kilauea is not only one of the world's most active volcanoes, it's one of the world's tamest—comparatively speaking. On the right days, you can hike out onto the flow field and stand as close to molten lava as you dare. See p. 401.

Eating a volcano. At Sushi Rock, on the northern tip of the island, a sushi chef, unrestrained by traditional training, makes a roll called the Mauna Loa Eruption: ahi, smoked salmon, and a seasonal Hawaiian white fish made into a shield volcano with scallion cream and fiery orange tobiko pouring down its sides. See p. 372.

Splurging on a top meal in Volcano Park. Albert Jeyte, an Emmy-winning makeup artist, retired from Hollywood, became a chef, and opened the finest fine-dining restaurant on the Big Island—Kilauea Lodge—where French and German classics share the menu with ostrich filet. See p. 378.

Swimming in an underwater park. Kealakekua Bay is a state park, a marine-life conservation district, and one of the best places to snorkel on the Big Island. See p. 411.

Walking the ancient Place of Refuge. At the remarkably well-preserved sanctuary of Puuhonua o Honaunau, noncombatants could find safety in wartime and *kapu* (taboo) breakers could find a second chance. See p. 386.

Drinking *awa* with Hawaiians & hippies. Join the laid-back and motley crowd of regulars from the wilds of rural Puna to partake in the mildly narcotic but perfectly legal pleasures of the *awa* root. See p. 408.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Volcanoes National Park is the Big Island's main draw; the very size of the landscape, which includes ranches and cowboys, is the other major lure. The Big Island is the largest of the Hawaiian Islands, so big that all of the other islands could fit within its 4,028 square miles with plenty of room to spare. But, with a population of 163,000, it's still small enough for people to know their neighbors, and for gossip to travel fast. Big Island, small town, as people say.

Like the other main islands, the Big Island has a wet windward side and a dry leeward side. Yet because it's so large, the extremes are greater—the rainforests are more extensive, the waterfalls more numerous, and the lava deserts more withering. On the green east side, the city of Hilo gets 130 inches of rain per year. It's the rainiest city in the United States. Meanwhile, coastal areas on the dry west side, where most visitors stay, might get less than 10 inches of rain per year. Keahole Point, the westernmost tip of the island, gets so little rain it is known as the sunniest coastal area in the United States.

HOW THE BIG ISLAND CAME ABOUT

At just under a million years old, the Big Island is the youngest of the Hawaiian Islands. Culturally, though, it is where Hawaii began. The first Polynesians to settle the Hawaiian archipelago started here, at South Point, the remote, wind-swept southernmost tip of both the island and the United States. Throughout the Big Island, you'll find more remnants of the ancient world these first people created than anywhere else in Hawaii. Some are carved in stone, thousands of times, in the densest petroglyph fields of the Pacific. There are also ancient fishponds to see, *heiau* (temples), and village sites, as well as Puuhonua O Honaunau, where Hawaiians could find refuge in times of war or redemption if they had broken a *kapu.*

This is the island from which King Kamehameha came, the first Hawaiian king to rule all of Hawaii. Today you can hike to the place he was born, drive to the massive war *heiau* he built, and attend a luau at what were once the grounds of his royal compound, where he died.

BEACHES & VOLCANOES

The Big Island is too young to have much of its 282 miles of coastline adorned with beaches, but the beaches it does have rival Oahu's, Maui's, and Kauai's best. In addition to powdery white- or golden-sand beaches, it's got black-sand beaches, hallmarks of a volcanic island still in the fiery throes of development. The Big Island's most famous black-sand beach, Kaimu Beach, disappeared in 1990 beneath a lava flow from Kilauea. A new beach, however, is forming in the area, and you can hike out over the lava at the end of the road (which was also covered) in Puna to see it.

A Note on Terminology & Organization

Hawaii is the proper name for the Big Island, but most people use the latter name to distinguish the island from the state. The ancient Hawaiians divided the Big Island into six districts, which are still recognized today: **Kona, Kohala, Hilo, Hamakua, Puna,** and **Kau.** I've divided the sections of this chapter in two: east Hawaii and west Hawaii. West Hawaii includes Kona and Kohala, where most visitors stay. East Hawaii takes in the rest. To balance east and west, I've given South Point, the southernmost tip of the island, to East Hawaii, though it could have logically gone to the other side. The northern part of the island, inaccessible from the east side, falls clearly into west Hawaii. Mauna Kea, which looms large over both sides of the island, looms largest over east Hawaii, so that's where I placed it.

Nowhere is the line between creation and destruction crossed more often than it is at Kilauea. This relatively puny 4,000-foot-tall volcano began its ongoing eruption in 1983, destroying palm groves, beaches, highways, ancient sites, an ill-conceived modern subdivision, and the fishing village of Kalapana, while adding 600 new acres of land to the earth, and counting. Located mostly within Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, you can, on a good day, hike out to where molten lava oozes, pools, and cascades across the flow field, sometimes pouring from 80-foot cliffs into the sea. On Kilauea's summit, you can watch volcanic gasses rise from 400-foot-deep Halemaumau Crater, where the volcano goddess Pele dwells.

Pele's rival, the goddess of snow, Poliahu, makes her home atop Mauna Kea (another of the island's major mountains). Historically, these two goddesses haven't gotten along. It's been 3,500 years or so since Pele last invaded Poliahu's territory, with a series of explosive late-stage eruptions that left Mauna Kea's summit covered with pimply cinder cones. But a few times each year, Poliahu continues to taunt Pele by dusting the smooth black dome of Mauna Loa with snow. Pele hasn't answered for some time, but since Mauna Kea is classified as dormant, not extinct, I wouldn't count her out.

Pele may quietly seethe when it snows on Mauna Loa (still another mountain), but only astronomers get upset when it snows on Mauna Kea. They can wait years for a few precious hours at one of the 13 telescopes on the summit, the best place for astronomy on the planet, and if it snows on their nights, they're out of luck. Others on the island love the snow. They dash up to the summit with snowboards and inner tubes, and to fill the beds of their pickups with powder so they can make snowmen at the beach.

With a four-wheel-drive rental, or on a tour, you can get to the top of Mauna Kea to ponder the universe from a point above so much of the earth's atmosphere, the stars don't twinkle. Or you can drive as far as 9,200 feet, to the visitor center, which is still plenty high. That's where I once went to watch the sunrise. As the sky lightened that morning, my chattering teeth relaxed, and slowly the clouds beneath me began to part and thin. I could see patches of ocean glaring white

with sunlight, and then parts of the coastline. It would be warm at the beach for sure, and I thought about maybe heading there next. Either way, it would in all likelihood turn out to be another beautiful day on the Big Island.

LAY OF THE LAND

Here are the highlights of the Big Island's major areas:

WEST HAWAII

Kona

On the sunny west side of the island, Kona is the center of Big Island tourism, with its sunset cruises, marlin fishing, luaus, historic sites, and abundance of places to shop, eat, stay, and lounge around in the sun. Dormant Hualalai volcano, rising to 8,275 feet, dominates the north part of Kona, including the main town, Kailua-Kona (so named to distinguish it from Kailua, Oahu). Kailua-Kona has its charms (which you'll find mostly along or in the ocean) but it suffers from heat, dust, traffic, and tackiness. Nicer, mellower, cooler towns, such as Holualoa and Kealakekua, lie in Kona's upland areas, where Kona coffee comes from.

Kona has some of the best snorkeling spots on the island, including Kealakekua Bay, where Captain Cook was killed, and Honaunau Bay, home to the ancient Place of Refuge. The north part of Kona is covered with miles of desolate black lava fields, which have some startlingly beautiful beaches along them, as well as an alarmingly expensive resort development, the first along the Big Island's so-called Gold Coast.

Kohala

The string of Gold Coast resorts continues north of Kona into Kohala, where dazzling beaches share the shoreline with exclusive hotels, all along the edge of a vast lava desert. Rooms at these resorts tend to cost more than most dollar-wise travelers would ever pay, but great deals can sometimes be found and are worth looking for. Note, too, that the beaches in this area are accessible; they're public and open to everyone, as are all beaches in Hawaii.

North of the resorts, you can visit the enormous war *heiau* (temple) that Kamehameha built at Kawaihae, where the west side's only deep-draft harbor is. Inland, and set among velvety green hills and pastures at the base of the 4,120-foot Kohala Mountains, is Waimea, an old cowboy town gone upscale. This is the home of the enormous 225,000-acre Parker Ranch (which you can tour by horseback, ATV, or covered wagon).

At the northern tip of the island, on the other side of the Kohala Mountains, there are more ancient Hawaiian sites to see, including Kamehameha's birthplace, as well as former plantation towns like Hawi, and the lush Pololu Valley, with a beach that threatens swimmers but rewards beachcombers.

EAST HAWAII

Hilo-Hamakua Coast

Through the former sugar-cane-growing region on the northeastern side of the island, there's a great drive along the rugged coastline that runs 50 miles into the districts of Hamakua and Hilo. It takes in the overlook at Waipio Valley to the

north, where Hawaiians still grow the taro they use to make poi, and runs to the city of Hilo. The route passes through rainforest and by waterfalls, including 440-foot Akaka Falls, with scenic detours along the way.

Hilo

The city of Hilo, predominant feature of the Hilo District, sits along crescent-shaped Hilo Bay, where cruise and cargo ships dock. Although rainy old Hilo is the second-largest population center in Hawaii, it has somehow maintained the feel of old Hawaii. Its frumpish downtown has some unusual shops and great restaurants, the island's best farmers market, and attractions including the Pacific Tsunami Museum (the city has been hit several times) and the well-kept old Lyman Mission House. Hilo is only about 40 minutes from Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, and a great stopping point or staging area for those headed to the park. Just out of town, on the way to the volcano, there's the Panaewa Rainforest Zoo, where visitors may borrow umbrellas and stroll the tropical grounds in any weather.

Volcanoes National Park

The 333,000-acre park is the state's top tourist attraction, drawing some 2.5 million visitors per year. It stretches from sea level to the 13,677-foot summit of Mauna Loa, the largest volcano both on earth and in the known solar system, and includes much of Kilauea, the island's other and more active volcano. Just outside the park, Volcano Village has some bed-and-breakfasts and great restaurants, spread out though the misty cool rainforest.

Puna & Kau

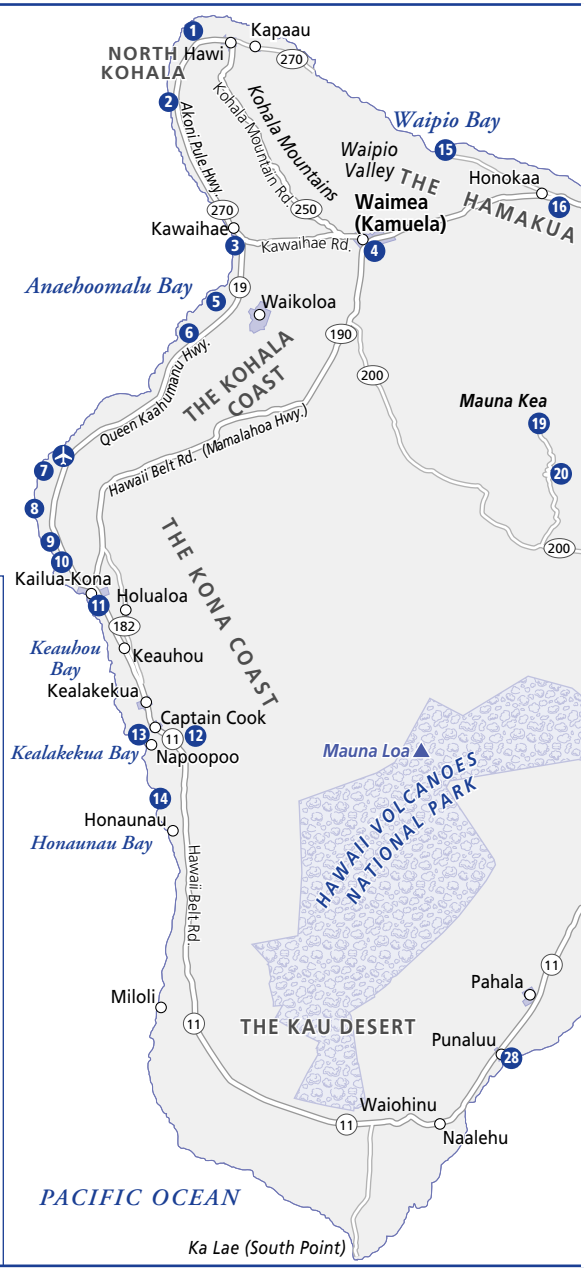
Kilauea straddles the enormous rural districts of Puna and Kau. The volcanic hazards have kept real-estate prices comparatively low, drawing back-to-the-landers, hippies, pot growers, New Agers, and a general variety of free spirits for decades. Lower Puna, in particular, is the land of alternative communities and realities. The central hub, Pahoa, has a boardwalk-lined main street and several great, cheap restaurants. A hot pond, a nude beach, a lively farmers market, and a newly forming black-sand beach (replacing one the volcano swallowed) are among the area's visitor attractions. To the south, Kau has the island's most accessible black-sand beach, at Punaluu Beach Park, as well as the southernmost point in the United States, South Point, and Green Sands Beach, which takes some effort to get to but really does have green sand.

GETTING TO & AROUND THE BIG ISLAND

The Big Island has two airports. If you're going to spend time on both sides of the island, consider arriving at one and departing from the other. A steep rental-car fee of $65 or so will apply, but you'll save hours of driving and be able to make a more logical tour of the island.

GETTING TO & FROM THE AIRPORTS

Kona International Airport at Keahole (☎ 808/329-3423), in West Hawaii, is where most visitors land. It has direct flights from San Francisco, Los Angeles, and



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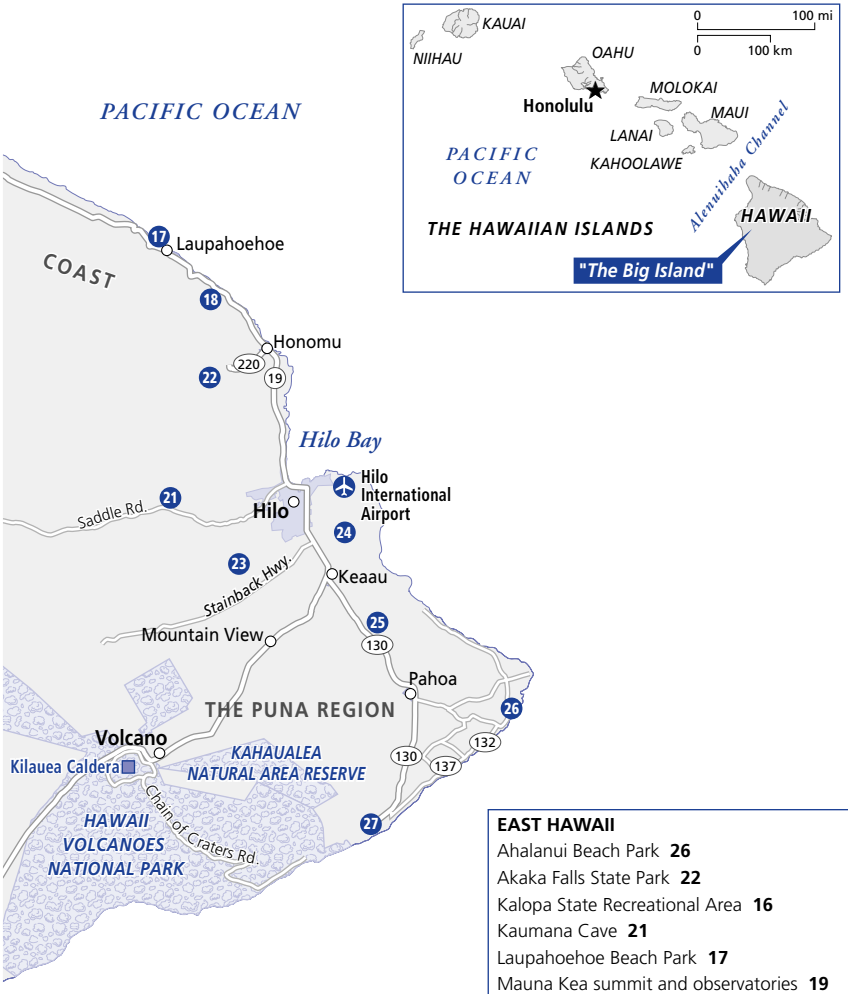

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Uncle's Awa Club **27**
Umauma World Botanical Gardens **18**
Waipio Valley Overlook **15**

Oakland, though most fly in making a stop first in either Maui or Oahu. **Island Air** (☎ 808/484-2222; www.islandair.com) tends to have the least expensive flights from those two islands (on average of $145 round-trip), so check its prices if you have to change planes (and most will).

Located 7 miles north of Kailua-Kona, the runway sits partially on a lava flow from 1801. First-time visitors are sometimes aghast when they land here for the first time, surprised by the desolation of the landscape. Don't worry, it's not all like this.

Hilo International Airport (☎ 808/934-5801), on the east side of the island, is located within the city limits, 10 minutes from downtown. It gets direct mainland flights from Oakland, and has indirect flights from Maui and Honolulu (again with Island Air offering the best fares; see above).

GETTING AROUND

You really need a **rental car** on the Big Island. Distances are great and public transportation is practically nonexistent.

In Kona and Hilo, Alamo, Avis, Budget, Dollar, Hertz, National, and Thrifty all have cars available at Kona International Airport. Of these, I've found that **Budget** (www.budgetrentacar.com; about $40 per day for an economy car with all taxes) tends to have the best prices for daily rentals, while **Alamo** (www.alamo.com; about $218 per week) beats the others on weeklong rentals. Since prices do shift often, however, be sure to shop around before renting, as it can mean big savings—between $40 and $100 dollars when I looked.

Note: If you're planning to drive Saddle Road, a somewhat dangerous drive (with a steep climb up and down), only National will come and pick you up should you break down (you drive at your own risk if you book a car through one of the other rental companies). The deal's the same to South Point, however not even National will venture out there should you have a problem—you're on your own. So, if you're considering driving one of these roads or up to the summit of Mauna Kea, turn to **Harpers Car and Truck Rental** (☎ 800/852-9993 or 808/969-1478; www.harpershawaii.com). It's the only company that will cover you wherever you drive as well as the only one to allow its four-wheel-drive vehicles to be driven to the summit of Mauna Kea. It's at the airport at Kona, and has a free shuttle to its offices for those who fly into Hilo.

The Ferry on the Way

At press time, **Hawaii Super Ferry** (www.hawaiisuperferry.com) was scheduled to begin offering ferry service—something Hawaii has been sorely lacking—between Honolulu, Maui, and Kauai in 2007. Service to the Big Island was expected to begin in 2009. With walk-on passenger fares of $50, the ferry would be the most economical way by far to travel between islands.

A Note on Maps

Most of the accommodations and some of the restaurants reviewed in this chapter lie outside of the near-scale maps of Kailua-Kona and Hilo on p. 367 and p. 375, respectively. For additional and more detailed maps, pick up one of the ubiquitous free visitor booklets such as ***Big Island Gold, This Week Big Island,*** and especially ***Big Island Maps, Beaches & Tours.*** You'll find them in the racks stuffed with colorful visitor-activity brochures that you'll run into everywhere, starting at the airports. These handy, pocket-size publications pinpoint many of the places to stay and eat on the island that you won't find listed on the maps here.

Taxis on the Big Island charge $2.40 per mile with a $3 drop fee. A cab ride from the airport to Kailua-Kona costs about $20. **SpeediShuttle** (☎ 877/521-2085 or 808/329-5433; www.speedishuttle.com), which runs passengers from the Kona airport to points around the island, charges about the same.

Arnott's Lodge and the Hawaii Naniloa Hotel send **shuttles** to the Hilo airport. No other shuttle or bus service is available. A taxi to the Banyan Drive Hotels of Hilo from the Hilo airport costs about $11; to downtown about $12; and to Volcano Village about $73.

ACCOMMODATIONS, BOTH STANDARD & NOT

by Pauline Frommer

When it comes to accommodations, the Big Island could be called the Budget Island. Nightly rates, except at the properties along the Kohala Coast, tend to be a good 15% to 20% lower than what you'd find for similar properties on Maui, Kauai, or Oahu.

That being said, the Big Island has less of a variety of accommodations within certain areas than the other islands do. Just as the topography of the Big Island shifts from area to area (and is continuing to shift as the mighty Pele adds acreage hour by hour with her lava flow), so the various kinds of accommodations shift dramatically from region to region. In Kailua-Kona, for instance, condominiums outnumber hotels 10 to 1, making condos the lodging of choice. South of Kona and in the town of Waimea, small B&Bs predominate; to the north, along the Kohala coast, it's all fantastically decadent and expensive luxury resorts; and for those looking to stay on the east side of the island, the outlook gets even wackier, with rustic campgrounds and Buddhist retreats competing with more standard options. Since the methods for finding nonhotel properties can be as important as picking the property itself, look for the boxes below that profile some of the top condo- and vacation-rental agencies. Be sure to cross-reference as you read, and compare the many options for lodging on the Big Island before making your final decision on where to stay.

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B&B's

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Average price per night for one double room: $ = Up to $100; $$ = $101 to $150; $$$ = $151 to $200; $$$$ = $201 and up

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Average price per night for one double room: $ = Up to $100; $$ = $101 to $150; $$$ = $151 to $200; $$$$ = $201 and up

WEST HAWAII

Kona

A honky-tonk of a town, Kailua-Kona is the Big Island's answer to Lahaina in Maui or Fort Lauderdale in Florida. Its central strip, beachfront Alii Drive, is lined with T-shirt shops, trinket stores, and such "yikes, this must be a really touristy place" red flags as the Bubba Gump Shrimp Company and the Hard Rock Cafe. Like much of the Big Island, there are only a scattering of sandy beaches; all the lodgings in Kona sit on the rocky shore, though a handful (as noted in reviews) are next to small patches of sand.

But if you're looking for reasonably priced, oceanfront accommodations, this area can be a mecca; there are affordable condos by the score, as well as a handful of hotels that provide excellent value for the money. Kona will also appeal to travelers who enjoy having a wide variety of shops, restaurants, and bars within easy reach.

Top Condo-Rental Companies in Kona

Three big fish (spinner dolphins, perhaps?) are active in the Kona rental market, and you'll probably find yourself booking with one of them if you decide to go the condo route.

Hawaii Resort Management, Inc. (75–5776 Kuakini Hwy., in the lobby of the Islander Inn; ☎ 800/244-4752 or 808/329-3333; www.konarentals.com; daily 8am–8pm) is the most proudly "budget" of the three, representing properties that run the gamut from top-of-the-line to slightly frayed around the edges. Unlike the other companies, which base prices solely on view, number of bedrooms, and season, this renter factors decor and upkeep into its prices, charging a bit less for places that might have a scuff mark on the wall or an older couch. "People come here to explore the Big Island, so they're looking for a clean, affordable place to stay," owner Jim Metcalf told me. "Price is what sells." All in all, HRM represents upwards of 250 condos all around Kona and a handful of vacation homes.

Knutson Realty (☎ 800/800-6202 or 808/629-6311; www.konahawaiirentals.com; Mon–Fri 8am–4:30pm) is highly selective in the properties it represents. "I don't believe you should come 5,000 miles and sleep on a musty pillow," laughed owner Barbara Knutson when we last spoke. "We have a reputation to uphold and most of our business is repeat customers, so I try and choose places that people will really love." To that end, Knutson only represents condos on the oceanfront side of Alii Drive and is militant about upkeep. Each of the condo owners gives her $200, which she can use for on-the-spot upgrades if needed, things like replacement shower curtains or new clock radios. Knutson and her staff also try to put customer service first. "I'm not hard as nails," says Knutson. "If someone doesn't like their place, I'll do everything in my power to move them and make sure they have an enjoyable vacation."

Vacationquest (77–6435 Kuakini Hwy.; ☎ 800/367-5169 or 808/329-6438; www.sunquest-hawaii.com; Mon–Fri 8am–6pm) represents a large range of properties at most of the resorts and in all price ranges. I've found the service here to be a bit lacking (late returns on phone calls, less than helpful with directions), but because they're the gatekeepers for upwards of 200 properties, you're going to want to contact them when shopping around.

CONDOS

As I said before, condos are the name of the game in Kona. For the most part, they offer an excellent value because they provide a full kitchen (which trims food costs), never charge extra for parking, and often come equipped with boogie boards and other beach items. Decorated by individual owners, it's nearly impossible to guarantee what you'll get in terms of looks, but after recently touring dozens of units in Kona, I found them all pleasant enough on the eyes, usually with a variation on the palm-tree and tropical-fish themes for the bedspreads and

The Fine Print on Condos

Before making a reservation, be sure to:

- **Read the cancellation policy.** For most condo rentals, full payment is due in advance of the stay and a cancellation can lead to a forfeiture if the rental agency is unable to rebook the unit. That's why it's usually a good idea to buy travel insurance, and you should be sure to get it from an outside source, as you don't want to lose your money if the condo-rental agency goes belly-up.
- **Calculate the cleaning fees.** These will vary from unit to unit and can add between $60 and $90 to the ultimate cost of your stay, so factor these in before booking.
- **Check for any additional fees.** Get all costs up front, before booking. You don't want to be surprised by a "reservations fee," or some other additional charge, at the end of your stay.

curtains; some type of rattan or wicker set of furniture in the living room; and framed nautical prints along the walls. I didn't find a single bed that was too soft or saggy, though I did see some that had minor upkeep problems (a slightly stained rug, a chipped chair). Those owned by folks who spend some portion of the year in them tend to be a tad nicer and better maintained than those with absentee landlords. (***Note:*** When you book, try to inquire about the owner's involvement.) All of the condos in this area can be booked through the major rental agencies in town (see box); or perhaps for a greater savings, through the direct-access website that pairs owners with renters, **VRBO** (www.vrbo.com), also known as Vacation Rentals by Owner. When I last checked, VRBO had 212 Kona condos advertised on its site, some listed for less than the condo-rental agencies were charging. If price is your priority, this may be the way to go, though if you're unhappy with your condo, you won't have the same ability to switch as you would when dealing with a rental agent who handles dozens of properties.

$ The cheapest decent condos can be found at the **Kona Islander Inn** (75–5776 Kuakini Hwy., south of Hualalai Rd.; see "Top Condo-Rental Companies in Kona" box, p. 348, for information on booking), a complex of six three-story buildings centered around a small oval pool and communal barbecue grill. Motel-like in its looks, all the units are studios, and small ones at that, with kitchenettes instead of kitchens, two-seater lanais, and tiny showers wedged into Lilliputian bathrooms. In its favor, the landscaping is quite lush, with abundant plants and trees lining the paths. Some units have ocean views (though distant ones; the condo is across the street from the ocean) and the Islander is within walking distance of all the downtown shops. Rooms rent for between $69 and $100 per night, though the price can drop to $49 a night at the slower times of the year (mostly in midautumn, with weeklong bookings only). Hawaii Resort Management (see above) represents the most units here (not surprising, as its offices are on property), though other companies also take a piece of the pie.

$–$$ A step up, both in price and ambience, is **Kona Magic Sands** (77–6452 Alii Dr.; see "Top Condo-Rental Companies in Kona" box, p. 348, for information on booking), whose major selling point is its magnificent sea views. Every unit has a lanai that overlooks the water. Though this place is one of many properties on the strip, its location gives the illusion that you're all alone with the sea and the spinner dolphins and whales you can watch from your balcony. As for the rooms, they're about a third bigger than those at the Islander Inn (above), with full usable kitchens and good-size bathrooms. In front of the complex is a handsome small pool that juts out over the ocean; if you want the real thing, you can simply stroll next door to the small sandy beach adjoining the property. The only place you may not want to "swim" is in your shower, as the water never seems to get beyond lukewarm. Still, for between $105 and $135 per night for an ocean-front condo (sometimes down to just $85), who's complaining? Also on-site is a very fine, white-tablecloth seafood restaurant.

$–$$$ Two pools, including one nifty rock-hewn saltwater pool overlooking the sea, are the crowning glory of the **Casa de Emdeko** (75–6082 Alii Dr.; see "Top Condo-Rental Companies in Kona" box, above, for information on booking). This nicely landscaped older property is about a mile from the hustle and bustle of town. Midsize one- and two-bedroom units are a good value here, spacious enough for families and renting for between $73 and $115 for the smaller units, and $150 and $185 for the two-bedrooms. An on-site convenience store and deli are a big plus for those who don't want to hit the traffic-clogged road into town.

$$–$$$ I like the **Kona Makai** (5–6026 Alii Dr.; see "Top Condo-Rental Companies in Kona" box, above, for information on booking) as much for its grounds as for its one- and two-bedroom apartments. Forming a rectangular box, with the ocean at one end, the property has a large, luxuriant grass lawn in the middle, with a medium-size pool at the ocean end and a hot tub to one side. In one of the complexes are two tiny gyms (one for weights, the other cardio), a Ping-Pong table, and well-maintained tennis courts. As for the units (approximately 600 sq. ft.), they're perfectly pleasant, with sea-view lanais. But it's the seaside location and all the outdoor entertainments here that make this property a particularly good deal at $105 to $124 a night (sometimes dipping to $77 for longer stays) for a one-bedroom, and about $15 more per night for a one-bedroom unit with an attached sleeping loft.

$$$$ Families and those looking for larger digs will enjoy the **Kona Nalu** (76–6212 Alii Dr.; see "Top Condo-Rental Companies in Kona" box, above, for information on booking), a complex of two-bedroom apartments, each with a huge seafront lanai (as large as some of the studios I've seen), and bedrooms divided by a bathroom and living room to give occupants of each a welcome measure of privacy. Full bathrooms, washers and dryers in each unit, a nice ocean-side pool, and an actual strip of white sand in front of the rock-strewn beach out front (a rare treat in these parts) are the other amenities that make Kona Nalu worth the $200-plus per night price tag. That may sound high, but these units can very comfortably sleep six, reducing the per-person cost. (I've also seen this property for less at www.vrbo.com, so shop around first.)

HOTELS AND B&BS

$ Kona has a half-dozen reasonably priced hotels, but I think the smallest, cheapest one is the best. You're not going to get Frette linens at the **Kona Tiki Hotel** ✰✰✰ (75–5968 Alii Dr.; ☎ 808/329-1425; www.konatiki.com; cash or traveler's checks only; book far in advance) or a decor that's anything but motel-simple. But you will be staying right on the ocean for as little as $65 a night (up to $88 for kitchenette units), and you'll have the pleasure of lodging at what has to be one of the most convivial, service-oriented small hotels in Hawaii. To put it simply, the people who work here are darn nice and go out of their way to please the guests—by giving great advice on local hot spots, keeping the place immaculate, supplying visitors with free beach toys, and providing an abundant (and included) fruit-laden continental breakfast each morning. This lends the Kona Tiki a clubby atmosphere, and most weeks the guests (70% returnees) throw potluck dinners, impromptu ukulele singalongs, and game nights, or simply gather to cook together at the communal BBQ grill. One of the guests blows a ceremonial conch to mark the moment of sunset. The only downside to this place—though those seeking a real escape from the world will think this an upside—is the lack of TVs and telephones. It costs an extra $6 for children ages 2 to 12 to stay in their parents' rooms, extra adults are $8.

$ While not nearly as special, the **Kona Seaside Inn** kids (75–5646 Palani Rd., at Kuakini Hwy.; ☎ 800/560-5558 or 808/329-2455; www.konaseasidehotel.com) is also a terrific value, and Hawaiian-owned, so you know you're doing the right thing by staying here. Its mountain-view rooms (read: overlooking the street) are a steal starting at just $88; quieter ones, with views of the interior gardens, come in at a reasonable $98. The key to booking here is to use the hotel's website, where there are nearly always specials, slashing a good 30% off the published rates even in high season. The rooms themselves are standard-looking and can vary widely in decor from building to building in this complex, so if you don't like what you're offered, ask to see another (there are 225 in total). On the grounds are two small swimming pools, a restaurant, and a bar; each well-maintained room comes equipped with air-conditioning, cable TV, and a fridge. Children under 12 stay free in their parents' rooms.

$ My favorite B&B in Kona—and there aren't that many to choose from—is the brand-new **Kiwi Gardens** (74–4920 Kiwi St.; ☎ 877/526-8352; www.kiwigardens.com), a secluded, gated retreat 3 miles into the mountains above Kona. It's a bit of an odd place—the living room is outfitted to look something like a

Staying Connected

The Big Island is a bit behind the mainland when it comes to offering Wi-Fi capability at hotels and other lodgings. In general, Wi-Fi won't be available, though I've noted the hotels that do have it (and if I don't mention it, you can assume it isn't available at that property).

1950s ice cream parlor, with an actual soda fountain and round leatherette booth—but the three guest rooms here are tremendously comfortable, especially the massive master suite ($95 per night), which looks out onto its own private section of a porch and beyond to the distant sea. Two smaller but still generously proportioned rooms, go for $85 and share a bathroom. You'll get pretty accurate pictures of the rooms on the website. The daily breakfast, included in the price, is picked from the organic garden at back by the friendly horticulturist host, whose day job is at the nearby golf club, overseeing the landscaping there. Though the fruits may look gnarled, they're exquisitely sweet. ***Note:*** Occasionally, this B&B's owner drops the price to $70 a night for those over the age of 60; ask.

$$ If you happen to come to Hawaii on an air/hotel package, you're likely to be lodged at the **Royal Kona** (75–5852 Alii Dr.; ☎ 800/22-ALOHA; www.hawaiianhotelsandresorts.com), which used to be owned by Pleasant Hawaiian Holidays and still hosts its customers (as well as those of other group travel companies). An older property, its appeal is retro-groovy, in the manner of Austin Powers: hip but somewhat bucktoothed. The on-site restaurant is a tiki bar gone wild, with massive faux Polynesian wooden sculptures. Guest rooms feature such nostalgic touches as chairs with pineapples carved into their backs, Chinese dragons lamps, and Asian-accented bureaus. (It's kind of cute, and the firm beds in the midsize rooms are comfortable, so what the heck?) If you ignore the published rates and go to this place's website, it's easy to get a garden-view room for between $105 and $120. (The hotel is right over the water, so this may be the place to splurge on an oceanview room at $140 and up.) The resort throws a twice-weekly luau; it also boasts a private saltwater swimming lagoon and a small freshwater pool. There's Wi-Fi in the lobby, but not yet in the rooms.

$$–$$$$ My final choice in Kona looks like a splurge from afar. It's a full-service resort with a spa, two sleek restaurants, tennis courts, four bars (with nightly live entertainment), and a golf course a short drive away. The rooms are handsomely appointed with teak and wicker furniture, plush beds, celadon green walls, and unusual square bathtub/showers. The grounds are fascinating to wander; they contain an ancient fertility spring in one grove of trees, and a series of tide pools much beloved by green turtles (forming an impromptu zoo at the front of the hotel). Hotel guests are also blessed with one of the best snorkeling beaches on the island, just next door to the resort. But the **Outrigger Keauhou Beach Resort** ★★ kids (78-6740 Alii Dr.; ☎ 800/OUTRIGGER or 808/322-3441; www.outrigger.com) is actually a bargain hunter's paradise. Though it advertises rates starting at $209 a night, it's a snap to find these same garden-view rooms for just $120, mostly through Expedia.com, which gets the best rates at this property (better than what you'll find by calling direct). Those who'd prefer a glimpse of the ocean will spend $30 to $70 more, depending on the rate and season, which is still a good deal for a resort of this quality.

A HOSTEL OPTION

$ The only hostel in Kona is the **Koa Wood Inn** (75–195 Ala Ono Ono St.; ☎ 808/326-7018), a somewhat grubby place in an iffy neighborhood far from the water. When I last visited, the manager was making a lot of noises about

improving it, though that hasn't happened yet. Still, if you need something ultra-cheap, at $25 a night for a dorm-room bed, you won't do better in Kona. Some of the mattresses are just fine, while others will tattoo their every spring into your back, so ask to switch beds if you're uncomfortable. The inn also has some private bedrooms, but they aren't as nice as similarly priced ones closer to the ocean.

The South Kona Coast

For an area as caffeinated as this one—the South Kona Coast is home to the Big Island's major coffee plantations—this is a remarkably laid-back region of small towns, winding mountain roads, and breathtaking sea vistas. Stay here if you'd like to have the shopping and restaurants of Kailua-Kona within easy reach but want to avoid the crowds. It's also the best place to decamp if you plan to spend a significant amount of time at the Place of Refuge (p. 379), the Big Island's second-most important tourist sight. Snorkeling is another huge draw in the Place of Refuge area, and while none of the lodgings below are directly on the beach, they're all an easy 5- to 10-minute drive away.

$ Lodgings in this area consist primarily of B&Bs. The one exception is the **Manago Hotel** (P.O. Box 145, Captain Cook; ☎ 808/323-2642; www.managohotel.com), a ramshackle old joint which was opened in 1917 with rooms in the older part of the hotel that look like they were lifted from a documentary on the Great Depression: peeling paint, sagging beds in cell-like rooms, a chipped lonely dresser huddled against a wall. These double rooms, which attract a number of permanent residents, all share communal bathrooms and go for just $33 per night, making them perhaps the cheapest private rooms on the island. But if that sounds a bit too hard-core, the hotel has a newer section at the back that boasts firm beds (mattresses are moved from here to the cheaper part of the hotel when they wear out), spic-and-span bathrooms, and lanais with lovely ocean views (especially from the top floor) for between $51 and $59 a night. There are no phones or TVs in either area of the hotel.

$–$$$ The truth is, B&Bs aren't necessarily superexpensive and there are delightful ones in this area. The **Naia B&B** ★ kids (83–5410 Middle Ke'ei Rd., Captain Cook; ☎ 877/328-8053 or 808/328-8053; www.naiaaloha.com), for example, is a hidden hillside retreat with a pool (plus a hot tub) larger than many of the condo pools in Kona, where guests have a choice of four pretty rooms with colorful quilts on comfy beds and lots of plush armchairs to sink into, starting at just $65 for a loft room with private bathroom (larger rooms range from $85 to $125). Another find, the **Belle Vue B&B** ★ kids (P.O. Box 670, Kealakekua; ☎ 800/772-5044 or 808/328-9898; www.kona-bed-breakfast.com) is aptly named: The view from the front lawn, ideal for bird-watching, is one of the loveliest I've seen on the island. Two pastel rooms are for rent, each with its own fully functional kitchen, good firm beds, and lanais shaded by a beautiful rose trellis (the Swiss owner also dots the rooms with fresh-cut flowers). Rooms go from $115 to $145 per night, but can drop to as little as $95 for stays of a week or longer. Both properties are family-friendly, with pull-out couches to accommodate extra guests (ask about additional fees), barbecue grills for outdoor cooking, and generous Hawaiian continental breakfast spreads in the mornings that feature fruits plucked from trees on the property.

$$ The **Rainbow Plantation B&B** ✯ (81–6327B Mamalahoa Hwy., Captain Cook; ☎ 800/494-2829 or 808/323-2393; www.rainbowplantation.com) is its own peaceable kingdom tucked away in a very junglelike nook of Captain Cook, down the hill a bit and off the main highway. A menagerie of friendly beasts roam the property—miniature horses, a potbellied pig named Cleopatra, turkeys, chickens, peacocks, and parrots—and the rooms and tiny cottages ($79–$89/night) have a rustic charm, with hand-painted murals on the walls, good beds, TVs, and an eclectic collection of furnishings. My favorite is an actual 34-foot fishing boat that the owners have moored on the hillside; it has a decent-size living room at front, blessed with spectacular sunset views, and a small queen-size berth in back for sleeping (there's also a futon couch on which to sleep in the front for those who might be a bit claustrophobic). It's utterly delightful and costs just $89 a night, including a large modified continental breakfast (along with the usual fruits and breads, the owner boils up her chickens' multicolored eggs). Guests have use of a fully serviceable and covered outdoor kitchen, and when not dining, they can plug in to high-speed Internet access.

$$ Equally oddball (and I think charming) is the coffee shack at the **Pomaika Lucky Farm B&B** ✯ (83–5465 Mamalahoa Hwy., Captain Cook; ☎ 800/325-6427; www.luckyfarm.com). Once used for storing coffee, it's an actual shack but a fairly spacious one, with a corrugated tin roof and walls that are really mosquito screens, so you have an unimpeded view into the rainforest on three sides. Don't worry: When it rains here, the drops come down vertically, so those sleeping inside don't get wet (and the platform queen-size bed is comfortable). A private toilet and washbasin are behind a small wall in the shack; just outside is an outdoor shower (with privacy-protecting walls). It's a unique setting and affordable at $85 a night. The B&B also has three other fairly standard but nice rooms for $70 to $80, and all guests get a generous, cooked breakfast in the mornings. Guests can also snack on the macadamia nuts that blanket the grounds of this 4-acre working farm.

$$–$$$ I saved the best for last. The **Areca Palms Estate Bed & Breakfast** ✯✯✯ (P.O. Box 489, Captain Cook; ☎ 800/545-4390 or 808/323-2276; www.konabedandbreakfast.com; no guests under age 7) is where you stay when you're celebrating something—or simply want to turn your vacation into a celebration. This handsome, deep-brown cedar house with cathedral ceilings surrounded by areca palms (hence the name) has four guest rooms ($99–$130 per night) that are individually decorated with lovely quilts and pretty plates on the walls, quality Tempur-Pedic mattresses, and cable TVs with VCRs. Innkeepers Janice and Steven Glass work diligently to make their guests comfortable. In addition to providing a different type of breakfast each morning (including such scrumptious treats as Hawaiian sweet-bread French toast, stuffed with sour cream), they put out tea and cookies in the late afternoon, lend guests everything they'd need for a day at the beach, and fill the house with amusements from board games to books about the island to a video-tape library for guests' use. There's also a hot tub out back. But what really sticks with me are the ambrosial smells of the place: In the afternoon, the wind brings in the scent of coffee roasting from neighboring plantations and, in the morning and evenings, the blossoms from the Belladonna trees on this property perfume the air. A top pick.

EAST HAWAII

The Kohala Coast (aka The Gold Coast)

Massive, self-contained luxury resorts are the draw on the Kohala Coast, and those who stay here pay dearly for the experience, with rooms *averaging* $350 to $450 a night, with extra fees for food, activities, and anything else a hotel can think to charge you for. Still, if you want to be cocooned in luxury, swim with dolphins, and plunge down water slides, these are the only places on the island that will fully satisfy your cravings.

I've found that there are very few real discounts to be had by calling the resorts directly, visiting in low season, or even contacting the standard discounters. However, if you can book through opaque websites (where you won't know what you're getting until after you pay) such as Priceline.com or Hotwire.com, you can score terrific deals, with nightly rates dropping to as little as $110 to $140 in *high season!* (If you don't believe me, visit the website **BiddingForTravel.com,** where users dish about how much they paid and which resorts they got when booking with Priceline). It's actually not that big a risk: Every resort on this coast is superb, and since all beaches in Hawaii are open to the public by law, you can visit the properties you're not staying at.

$$–$$$$ I'll focus on the properties that Priceline and Hotwire users score most often: the **Hilton Vista Waikoloa** ★★ kids (425 Waikoloa Beach Dr.; ☎ 800/HILTONS or 808/886-1234; www.hiltonwaikoloavillage.com) and the **Waikoloa Beach Marriott** ★ (69–275 Waikoloa Beach Dr., Waikoloa; ☎ 800/922-5533 or 808/886-6789; www.marriotthotels.com). The first property is simply humongous, so big, in fact, that guests ride a monorail and canal boats to get around its 65-acre grounds. The main lobby looks like something the ancient Sumerians might have built—a soaring space with huge slabs of stone, designed to impress. Along with all the standard luxury shops, restaurants, spas, tennis courts, two golf courses (one designed by Robert Trent Jones, Jr.), a small man-made beach, and swimming pools, you'll find a children's pool with a sandy bottom, intricate water slides, waterfalls in which you can swim, and a special little lake where one can swim with dolphins for a steep fee ($185 and 2-month advance reservations required). Standard rooms are midsize, pleasantly decorated with Hilton's copyrighted "Sweet Dreams" pillow-top mattresses (so comfy that they're now available for purchase). Room gadgets include cable TV with Nintendo and VCR and MP3 alarm clocks so you can program your wake-up music in advance.

The Marriott is less impressive, though much more intimate, and it does have one of the nicest beaches in the area, along with a top-rated luau (featuring an open bar, which is a big plus). Here you'll find two pools (one is for adults only, and one has a sandy bottom), tennis courts, two restaurants, and a 5,700-square-foot spa. Some room and meal packages are available, but not through Priceline, so they're probably not worth the cost.

$$$ Another reasonably priced option for travelers in this area—and as I said before, there aren't many—are condo rentals. I particularly like the **Vista Waikoloa Condos** ★ (69–1010 Keana Place). For booking information, contact **South Kohala Management** (P.O. Box 384900, Waikoloa; ☎ 800/422-4252; www.southkohala.com), a rental company that handles the largest number of units on this

property, or cruise to VRBO.com. Right near the Marriott, these condos are pleasantly laid out (all are spacious two- and three-bedroom units with good-size lanais, logical designs, and quality furnishings) and standards are strictly upheld. The nice on-site pool and convenient footpath to the beach are bonuses. Nightly rates average $260, but the price drops to $208 a night for weekly rentals and down to $169 for longer stays. In pricey Waikoloa, these rates are budget (believe it or not).

Waimea, Hawi & the Hamakua Coast

This is cowboy country; expect rodeos, horseback riding, and wide-open pastures that look somewhat like Montana (albeit with sparkling blue seas abutting the pasturelands). It's also a good hopping-off point for the Kohala coast and its beaches, which are just a 15-minute drive away—and you'll pay much less to stay at the reasonably priced B&Bs and motels here. Waimea boasts some of the best restaurants on the island.

$–$$$ In a town as scenic as Waimea, having a good view is key, and the top budget B&B here has killer ones. **Aaah, the Views B&B** ★ kids (P.O. Box 6593, Waimea; ☎ 808/885-3455; www.beingsintouch.com) overlooks a burbling stream backed by wide-open country vistas, and the placement of the house makes you feel like this is the only property on this bit of Hawaiian prairie. Some of the rooms ($80–$125, 10% discount for weeklong stays, $10 off for solo travelers) feature bottom bedrooms with large windows attached by ladder to glassed-in sleeping lofts. These rooms are ideal for families—the kids will love sleeping in the loft and the new owners have two preschoolers, so there are play opportunities galore. There's also a lovely deck out back for sunset watching and alfresco breakfasts, which are part of the price and include, along with a multitude of fruits, breads, and spreads, some kind of home-baked chocolate treat ("It's our trademark here," says owner Ericka Stewart with a twinkle.) Cable TVs with VCRs and Wi-Fi are also part of the package, and for $70 extra, Ericka's husband will drag out his massage table and unknot your back (he's a licensed massage therapist).

Our Man in Waimea

Sometimes it's who you know, and if you get to know rental broker/travel agent/former politician **James K. Dahlberg** (of Kamuela Travel, P.O. Box 309; ☎ 877/526-8352; www.kamuelatravel.com), you're more or less assured of getting a good rate on a vacation rental or a package. Representing some 31 properties around the island (of which he owns about half), Dahlberg's prices are among the fairest on the island, whether you're looking at a cute, fully furnished two-bedroom in Waimea for $115 a night; or a full house on a spectacular black-sand beach in Kua for $175. With ties to the Hawaiian-owned hotels (perhaps from his days as a politico?), he can arrange astonishingly good room and car packages, dropping the price of a stay at the Royal Kona (p. 352), for example, to just $105 a night, including a compact-car rental. James is a good resource, so factor him in when you're pricing vacations.

A Worthy Splurge

Waimea is home to one of the island's most romantic lodgings, the **Jacaranda Inn** ★★★ (65–1444 Kawaihae Rd., Kamuela; ☎ 808/885-8813; www.jacarandainn.com; ages 13 and over only; **$$$$**). Set on a 12-acre estate, the centerpiece here is the grand 1897 home built for the Parker Ranch's manager. Though it's comparing apples and oranges, to my mind, this inn offers a far more unique—and less expensive—experience than any of the megaresorts along the nearby Kohala coast, and therefore may be a good middle ground for those who want a taste of luxury at a price within the realm of reason.

Today, guests will find a collection of nine cushy rooms and cottages, each imaginatively decorated with furniture and linens from the U.S. mainland and Indonesia. Some rooms look like they've been lifted from New England, with antique four-poster beds, jewel-toned wallpaper, and Oriental rugs. Others, such as the Southwestern room, have quirky touches like chandeliers made of antlers; or, in the Southeast Asian–inspired digs, hand-painted Balinese armoires and elaborately carved statuary. Bathrooms in each are oversize, with Jacuzzi tubs and fine fixtures. Prices range from $159 to $179, with one suite going for $225 and an on-property cottage for $450. Hearty hot breakfasts are included in the nightly costs. For those planning a *really* special occasion, there's a lovely chapel on the property for wedding ceremonies, as well as a scenic waterfall that's a perfect backdrop for wedding photos.

$ You'll find more standard accommodations at the **Waimea Country Inn** (65–120 Lindsay Rd., Kamuela; ☎ 808/885-4100; www.castleresorts.com), a spic-and-span motel with a friendly staff and rooms that feature sloping knotty-pine ceilings, good-quality beds, lovely mountain views, and cable TV—all for $85 a night.

$$–$$$ Just down the road from Aaah, the Views are two value-priced rental cottages called the **Waimea Garden Cottages** ★ (P.O. Box 520, Kamuela; ☎ 800/262-9912 or 808/985-7488). These good-size, spotless, pleasant units come with full kitchens and every amenity you could want—including washers and dryers, 400-channel cable TVs with DVD players, fax machines, and a store of beach toys, videos, and Hawaiiana books. The niftiest elements here are the beds, which have the gee-whiz ability to adjust from harder to softer at the touch of a switch (each side of the queen-size beds adjusts separately). The smaller cottage goes for $110 to $120 a night, and the larger cottages are about $135, with discounts for longer stays and a $15 per-person charge when you have more than two adults.

Hawi

$ At the northernmost tip of the island is a small plantation town called Hawi. Here, you have just one lodging option, but it's a cute one: **Kohala Village Inn** ★ (55–514 Hawi Rd., Hawi; ☎ 808/889-0404; www.kohalavillageinn.com), a spiffed-up former motel. Renovated in 2004, it has all kinds of modern bells and

whistles including Wi-Fi, cable TV, truly stylish teak furnishings, and surprisingly fine bedding and beds. It's also white-glove clean. Rooms are available in all sorts of configurations from decent-size singles ($65) to doubles ($75) to regular doubles with pull-out couches ($85–$100), and there's no charge for extra adults or children in the room. In the morning, the inn will send you on your way with a bagel breakfast, included in the cost. The only downside is the lighting: Rooms are off of a center courtyard, and the light from the walkway surrounding that courtyard shone through my thin curtains all night (but I'm hoping they'll soon fix this flaw; it's a lovely little inn otherwise).

Along the Hamakua Coast

$ Farther south on the Hamakua Coast, about 10 miles north of Hilo, in the tiny former sugar town of Wailea, my choice for cheap sleeps is **Akiko's Buddhist Bed and Breakfast** ✯ (P.O. Box 272, Wailea; ☎ 808/963-6422; www.alternative-hawaii.com/akiko; children 13 and older only). You don't have to meditate or be Buddhist to stay here, though all guests are welcome to join Akiko at 5am for her daily sessions of Zen meditation (there are also evening sessions 3 nights a week, as well as periodic workshops). Akiko wants to attract all sorts of guests, and she's created different types of lodgings out of this former tofu factory, garage, and plantation, which she's "reincarnated" to house them all. "As long as they're decent human beings," Akiko says of prospective guests, "they are welcome here."

For a true retreat experience, try the **Monastery House,** a place for guests to "get in touch with themselves and be grounded," according to Akiko. The digs here are austere: shared bathrooms, tatami-matted rooms with no furnishings except for sleeping futons, and a code of silence between 6:30pm and 6am daily. Next door, the **Pu'uhonua House** is more of a traditional B&B, a five-bedroom plantation house with western-style beds covered in quilts, wooden dressers, and lace curtains shading the windows. Bathrooms are shared here, too, as is the outdoor shower house (with water heated by solar energy). Stays at both properties are $40 for a single, and $55 for a double, with a 2-night minimum. Recently, Akiko built two attractive small studio cottages, which are comfortably furnished and a bit set off from the rest, sharing one kitchen and bathroom between them; the smaller one costs $65 per night and the larger house is $85.

In the morning, all guests gather for a healthy breakfast (oatmeal, hard-boiled eggs, fruits from the garden, dozens of teas) and speak to one another in hushed voices, often pitching in on the dishes. Some hang around the property for workshops, others take the 10-minute-stroll to a lovely nearby beach or bike into Hilo, but what they all share is the conviction that this is a very special, extraordinarily serene place. I would have to agree. ***Note:*** Credit cards are not accepted.

Hilo

Hawaii's second-largest metropolis after Honolulu, Hilo serves as a good gateway to the rainforest, and is used by many as their home base when visiting Volcanoes National Park, a half-hour drive south of here. Though the downtown has been drained of much of its vitality by the development of massive shopping centers on the outskirts, it has a number of lovely neighborhoods filled with historic homes.

$–$$ If hotels are your speed, you can't do better than the **Dolphin Bay Hotel** ★★ kids (333 Iliahi St.; ☎ 877/935-1466 or 808/935-1466; www.dolphinbayhotel.com). Although it looks like your standard cinder-block motel from the outside, it is in fact a terrifically well-maintained, friendly place with more amenities than you can usually get at these prices (rooms start at $79, with one- and two-bedroom apartments about $20–$40 more). First off, each room is actually a minisuite with a snappily decorated, good-size bedroom on one side, a bathroom in the middle, and a usable kitchenette on the other; those that are listed as one-bedrooms also have a living room with a fold-out couch. On the property is a small walking trail, and a grove of fruit trees that guests are encouraged to snack from. Finally, the staff is an attentive, knowledgeable bunch who post daily information on volcano activity (the owner is an amateur volcanologist) and can help set up tours. When was the last time you got all that for less than $80? Book far in advance, as this place gets lots of repeat business. "The first time people come here, they stay for 2 days," the desk clerk told me. "Next time, they book for a week."

$–$$ With its ocean views, recently renovated rooms, and kind-to-the-back mattresses, **Uncle Billy's** ★ (87 Banyan Dr.; ☎ 800/367-5102 or 808/961-5818; www.unclebilly.com) is another fine choice, the only "budget hotel" on Hilo's main hotel strip, Banyan Drive, but the one offering the best values nonetheless (some of the neighboring ones weren't nearly as tidy when I last came to town). A family affair—Uncle Billy is still active at his hotel in Kona, and this one is run by one of his seven children—this place is low-key and friendly, with a small pool out front, a bar/restaurant on-site, and washer/dryers for guests' use. Booking online can often drop the nightly rate to $84 including breakfast (kitchenette rooms and ocean views cost $10–$15 more).

$–$$ If you'd like to lodge in a true historic beauty, go directly to **Maureen's B&B** ★, (1896 Kalaniana'ole St., Hilo; ☎ 800/935-9018 or 808/935-9018; www.maureenbnb.com), a baronial-looking redwood and cedar mansion built at the turn of the last century to house a Japanese businessman and his seven children (the family's teahouse is on-site as well as a lovingly tended Japanese garden with a koi pond out back). Maureen Goto, the lively, friendly owner, has filled the house with attractive antiques, period wallpapers, and squishy couches. It's a delightful place to stay, across the street from a nice beach (where turtles will swim with you; don't touch them though, because that's illegal) and in one of Hilo's many microclimate zones that gets significantly less rain than the rest of the surrounding areas. All rooms share bathrooms and range from $65 (single) to between $85 to $115 (double). Prices include breakfast (usually a quiche or waffles) each morning.

$$ For rooms with more of a view—spectacular ones, actually—I'd suggest the **Hale Kai B&B** ★★ (111 Honolii Pali; ☎ 808/935-6330) or the **Inn at Kulaniapia Falls** ★★ (P.O. Box 646; ☎ 888/838-6373 or 808/966-6373). Set on a cliff overlooking the ocean, **Hale Kai B&B** has four sea-view guest rooms with floor to ceiling windows, colorfully decorated with hand-stenciled walls and original photos by the owner. Each room has its own small semi-private seating area out front, great for whale-watching, and prices range from $115 to $130 including a gourmet breakfast (basil frittata, anyone?). If that isn't enough to sell you, there's a

small pool at front and a black-sand beach just a 10-minute stroll down the hill. A real find.

The **Inn at Kulaniapia Falls** is another top choice with the most Hawaiian of all accessories: a majestic waterfall, in which you can swim, as well as extensive grounds for hiking (a second, smaller waterfall is sided by a wooden deck for picnics). Although it's a 20-minute drive from the center of Hilo on somewhat rutted roads past macadamia-nut farms, the effort is more than justified by the property's superb setting, and the price is ultrareasonable at $109 per room (two with queen-size beds, two with kings) including a generous breakfast buffet. There's also a pagoda-like guesthouse with its own kitchen that can sleep up to four and goes for $200 a night ($250 with four guests). Both B&Bs have Wi-Fi.

A HOSTEL OPTION

$ Of the two hostels in Hilo, **Arnott's Lodge** (98 Apapane Rd., off Hwy. 19; ☎ 808/969-7097; www.arnottslodge.com) has more character and offers better value than its competitor. It's a bit out of the way, but offers free pickup and drop-off from/to the airport, rents bikes for just $2 a day, and runs a number of well-priced tours to Mauna Kea and the volcano. In addition to hostel rooms (clean, sleeping six, sturdily built bunks, $20/person), there's also a lawn for campers to pitch a tent ($10) and semiprivate rooms with shared bathrooms ($42 single, $52 double). Character comes in because of all the extras here, including a large outdoor patio for lounging, a small theater filled with couches where guests can watch DVDs for free, and a "guest appreciation party" every Saturday night featuring free beer and pizza (and if that ain't heaven for a backpacker, I don't know what is).

Puna

If you want to get a way from it all—I mean really get away—go to Puna, where the tourist presence is nil and folks spend their days hiking through the rainforest and bathing in thermal pools (heated by mighty Pele). A large area south of Hilo and east of the volcano, it may well be one of the last truly undiscovered regions in Hawaii.

$ Because of this area's off-the-beaten-path nature, I only recommend two places here. There's **Art and Orchids B&B** ★ (16–1504 39th Ave., Keaau; ☎ 877/393-1894 or 808/982-8197; www.artandorchids.com), a cute yearling with three rooms ($89–$99 each). The hosts of this property are making a name for themselves with their "above and beyond" hospitality style. Along with abundant and delicious breakfasts, they've been known to throw in free dinners for folks who arrive hungry and will pack up a box breakfast for those who need to leave early (guests also have use of the kitchen and can cook for themselves). The house is stocked with dozens of books and DVDs for guests' use (each room comes with its own DVD player and high-end cable TV) plus snorkels, beach towels, and other beach toys are lent to guests free of charge. They even offer on-site babysitting and art classes to those who come with children. There's an art studio out back (hence the name) and the owner Markie will teach interested guests how to make paper and do other crafts ($15/hour). All in all, this is a cute, unpretentious B&B decorated with the owner's handmade turtle mosaics. One final selling point: This place has Jacuzzi bathtubs and a hot tub out back.

$–$$$ Another good option in Puna is a vacation-home rental; you'll be able to get your own beachfront cottage here for much less money than you could on other parts of the island. Two particularly sweet ones are at **Carson's Oceanfront Kapoho Cottages** ✭✭ (☎ 800/605-8439; www.sunnykapoho.com). One cottage is across the street from the beach (a two-bedroom from $95, with beds enough for five) and a much more glamorous stilt house for $165, again with two bedrooms, is smack dab on the sand and rock beach (good for swimming). Right near thermal hot ponds and a clothing-optional black-sand beach, both cottages feature Indonesian bamboo furnishings, full kitchens, firm mattresses, and, in the case of the beachfront home, unbeatable views.

Volcano-Area Housing

Because the area around Volcanoes National Park isn't connected to the municipal water supply and has to rely on catchment water, it hasn't fallen prey to overdevelopment—there simply isn't enough water here to support massive luxury hotels. What you have instead are a dozen or so charming, smaller places, transforming a visit to Hawaii's top tourist attraction into a remarkably intimate experience. Don't make the mistake of staying at the large hotel within the park itself, as it's overpriced, with an unpleasant staff. You'll do better in the gateway community of Volcano or at the lovely campground within the park (see "A House of One's Own," below, and the "Camping & Cabins" sidebar, p. 366).

$–$$ For the price, you can't do better than the **Volcano Country Cottages** ✭ (P.O. Box 545; ☎ 888/446-3910 or 808/967-7960; www.volcanocottages.com), a collection of three free-standing houses (more are in the works). These cottages are run like a B&B; a fruit-and-pastries breakfast (included in the room rates) is brought to each house the evening before. Not that you need to rely on your hosts to eat: Each unit has a useable kitchen (stocked with condiments, coffees, and teas) as well as pleasant furnishings—pretty area rugs, comfy armchairs, and brightly colored quilts on firm beds. The smallest house, a good-size studio, is just $95 a night (it's very rare to get a full house for that price); there's also a one-bedroom and a two-bedroom cottage, which each go for $120 a night (plus $15 for every extra person over two). The final touch is a hidden hot tub down a path out back, in its own enclosure with candles galore for nighttime tubbing (electric lights would attract moths).

A House of One's Own

The listings here just scratch the surface of all the affordable vacation-home rentals in Volcano Village. To book one of the free-standing, private homes—and they can be quite nice, with lovely redwood walls, full kitchens, and spacious bedrooms—take a peek at the **Volcano Directory** (http://volcanogallery.com) and **Hawaii Volcano Vacations** (http://hawaiivolcanovacations.com), two helpful compendium booking sites.

Camping & Cabins

Ecological wonders—hot ponds, lava streams, deeply green rainforests—are the reason why so many visit the Big Island. And the best way to get up close and personal with all this splendor is to camp out in its midst. Here are my recommendations for campgrounds and cabins:

Hapuna Beach State Recreation area (on the South Kohala Coast; ☎ 808/587-0300; http://www.hawaii.gov/dlnr/dsp/hawaii.html): A basic shelter, with mattressless platforms, is available here for $20 a night for up to four. Six can stay here, but there's an extra charge of $5 per person. The reason to do it: direct access to one of the nicest beaches on the island.

Kalopa State Recreation Area (on the Hamakua Coast; ☎ 808/587-0300; http://www.hawaii.gov/dlnr/dsp/hawaii.html): Four rooms worth of bunk beds with mattresses, plus communal bathrooms and kitchens are available here for $55 a night for up to eight campers ($5 more for each additional person). Though there's also outdoor tenting ($5/night for up to five people), you're going to want to be indoors in this misty, rainy, very beautiful forest area.

Mauna Kea State Recreational area ✯✯ (along Saddle Rd.; ☎ 808/587-0300; http://www.hawaii.gov/dlnr/dsp/hawaii.html): Here, cabin camping is available on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights only for $35 to $45 a night for up to four people. You'll get nice, newly renovated cabins with

$–$$$ Kate's Volcano Cottages ✯ (P.O. Box 159, Volcano; ☎ 877/967-7790 or 808/967-7990; www.volcanoplaces.com) offer a similar experience, with four picturesque free-standing houses, enveloped in the rainforest, but here you have the added advantage of dealing with Kate herself, who is a dynamo, very helpful, and extremely knowledgeable about the area. She also supplies breakfast and her four cute properties (again nicely furnished with full kitchens and lanais) go for $95, $135, $150, and $240 a night, respectively (except for the last, they grow in size and amenities from a studio to a full three-bedroom house). The $240 property is the splurge of the bunch, an adult one-bedroom playhouse, very elegant with open beamed ceilings, an indoor Jacuzzi, full entertainment center, and covered lanai. All four properties have Wi-Fi.

$–$$ For a true B&B stay, but with free-standing cottages available as well, the hugely popular **My Island Bed and Breakfast Inn** ✯✯ (P.O. Box 100, Volcano; ☎ 808/967-7216; www.myislandinnhawaii.com) is an excellent pick. Run for more than 20 years by the gracious Morse family (Gordon Morse is a volcano expert and supplies guests with excellent written itineraries for all sorts of different

mattressed bunks, but because of the remote location, you'll have to bring in your own water. The draw here is the area, which is sublimely beautiful and looks more like the high desert of eastern Oregon than Hawaii. Also noteworthy is the spectacular star show at this 6,500-foot elevation. Camping is available as well, for $5 a night (for up to five people).

Namakani Paio and Kulanaokuaiki ★ (in Volcanoes National Park; ☎ 808/985-6000; http://www.nps.gov/havo/home.htm): You'll find free campgrounds within this park (though you'll have to buy a $10/week permit to enter the park). Namakani is in a peaceful eucalyptus grove, basically a large meadow with a paved loop along which you can camp. There's not a lot of privacy here, but it's still pleasant, as are the on-site cabins (which each feature one double bed, a bunk bed, a picnic table at front, and a barbecue grill; $50/night). Further into the park, with a lot more privacy, Kulanakuaiki is 5 miles down Hilina Pali Road at 2,700 feet elevation. It offers just eight campsites (also free with an entrance permit) with a vaultlike toilet; there's no water available at this site. Bring your own.

Wilderness camping within Volcanoes National Park (☎ 808/985-6011; www.nps.gov): You'll have to contact the rangers on the day of your hike in to ascertain which areas will be appropriate for pitching a tent (as the terrain significantly shifts here). Permits for wilderness camping are free, but note that there's no water in most parts of the park, so you'll have to bring in your own.

adventures in the vicinity), there are options here for every type of traveler and group, from cozy double rooms (also sold as singles for slightly less), to family rooms where up to five can bunk down in the same room, to free-standing cottages with one, two, or three bedrooms.

There are too many price permutations to list here (go to the website for full information), but the cheapest single goes for $55 a night, the cheapest double is $70, and houses tend to cost $145, but go up in price by $20 per person for every extra adult or child over 2. Whichever you pick, you can be assured you'll get spotlessly clean digs with homey furnishings (Amish-like quilts, rocking chairs, wooden dressers), and such nice touches as fresh flowers in vases and brand-new digital alarm clocks. The cottages also have cable TVs, VCRs, and phones; and all guests can partake of a generous breakfast at the main house. If you end up staying in a cottage rather than the main house, be sure to ask for a tour of the historic missionaries' home (built in 1886)—take a peek at the first bathtub in Hawaii (it's the still-used wooden one on the second floor).

$$–$$$ Hale Ohia Cottages ★★★ (P.O. Box 758, Volcano Village; ☎ 800/455-3803 or 808/967-7986; www.haleohia.com) offers travelers a chic, boutiquey alternative,

with Neiman Marcus–like linens, classy antique furniture, and whimsical architecture. One small, round cottage was created from a 1930s redwood water tank and transformed into a surprisingly elegant space; another has its own enclosed tropical garden at front, with a skylight over the bed; still another room, in the main house, transforms what must have been a family parlor into a lovely bedroom, with the bed nestled up against the bay window. The cheapest room here goes for $95, including breakfast, with larger digs costing between $109 and $159 for a three-bedroom house. With seven lodgings altogether, there are a number of variations to choose from here. The only downside: a higher-than-normal charge of $25 per person for extra guests over 2 years old in the rooms.

Kau

South Point, the southernmost point in the United States, is the big attraction here, though there are also some lovely black-sand beaches and thermal ponds. Remote Kau doesn't get all that much tourism, compared with Kona and Hilo, but it actually makes quite a logical jumping-off point for people who want to visit both the volcano and the Place of Refuge, as it sits smack dab in the middle.

$ Standard lodgings can be found at both the **Bougainvillea B&B** ✯ (P.O. Box 6045, Ocean View; ☎ 800/688-1763 or 808/929-7089; www.bougainvilleabedandbreakfast.com) and the **Shirakawa Motel** (P.O. Box 467, Naalehu; ☎ 808/929-7462; www.shirakawamotel.com), farther south along the coast. The **Bougainvillea** is a green oasis amidst a sea of black lava, with a good-size swimming pool and access to a nearby beach. The chatty owners do their best to keep guests amused with a full collection of DVDs and videos, Ping-Pong tables, an incredibly starry sky at night, and a gourmet breakfast each morn. Of the four rooms here, I happen to think those on the first floor are better looking—just a tad brighter—than those up above, but the owner charges the same for all ($70 single; $85 double) and, as a rule, doesn't allow guests to request specific rooms (though you can certainly try). Those on a stricter budget can turn to the **Shirakawa Motel,** which bills itself as "The Southernmost Motel in America," but in fact feels like a motel at the end of the world. It's clean, the beds are okay, and the owners are friendly, but everything is extremely worn—the walls are as thin as palm fronds. Still it's tremendously affordable at $45 a night for a double with private bathroom, and $55 for a kitchenette unit.

$ Peacocks preen, stone lions growl, and Buddhas grin beneficently at my favorite lodging in the area: the **Wood Valley Retreat and Temple** ✯✯ (P. O. Box 250, Pahala; ☎ 808/928-8539). This Tibetan Buddhist monastery was created from a classic pagoda/Japanese temple that's now over 100 years old. It's set in a serene, hidden valley at the base of Mauna Loa. As with Akiko's Buddhist B&B (p. 358), you don't have to be Buddhist to stay, though if you do want to engage in meditation, it's less hard-core here than at Akiko's, with residents and guests gathering to meditate at the civilized hour of 8am. Also highly civilized are the accommodations, each of which is decorated with linens and art from some area of the Asian Buddhist world (there's an India room, a Chinese room, and so on). The rooms are quite pretty, with good-quality Western beds, and nightly stays go for $50 (single) or $75 (double). For shoestring travelers, there are two dorm

rooms, segregated by gender, with wooden bunk beds for $35 a night. I very much enjoyed my time here, meeting with the elfin leader of the temple, Michael Schwab, a charming, very witty fellow who, if you ask nicely, will show you the opulent room the Dalai Lama uses when he comes to stay.

DINING FOR ALL TASTES

IN WEST HAWAII

Tourist meccas breed one-shot restaurants, places that charge too much for mediocre fare because they know there's an endless procession of transient diners to disappoint. West Hawaii suffers from this, though it also has a resistant strain of establishments that actually try to please their customers. Here are some of my favorites among them.

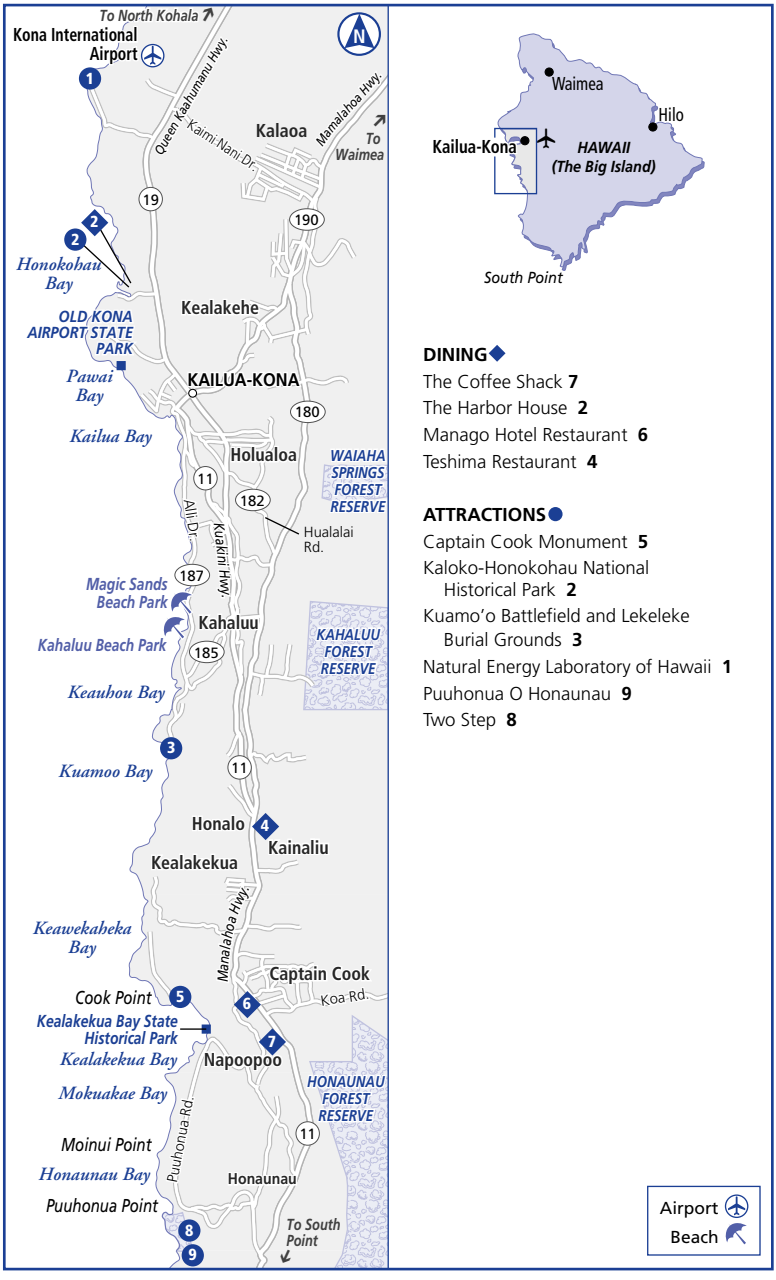
Kailua-Kona

$–$$ The mahimahi and the ono at **Kona Style Fish 'n Chips** ✯ (75–5687 Alii Dr., Kona; ☎ 808/329-4488) come either batter-fried or grilled, and in the form of either a sandwich ($8) or as fish and chips ($9.95). I gave this place a star because it serves good dinners for under $10, even though it's right in the most tourist-thick part of Alii Drive, where you're more likely to find overpriced, underwhelming meals. It has a simple, boxy, high-volume dining room with an open view of Kailua Pier, and it's the only place in the neighborhood with local-style breakfasts priced as though it were an ordinary local-style breakfast joint. If you appreciate Spam, as I do (I'm serious—grilled Spam is a favorite comfort food around here), get the classic local breakfast of two eggs, Spam, and rice ($4.75). Or forgo the Spam for some lesser breakfast meat, like bacon. You can also get an omelet ($6.75) and pancakes made from scratch ($4).

$–$$ **Island Lava Java** (75–5799 Alii Dr., at Coconut Grove Marketplace, Kona; ☎ 808/327-2161) is a coffeehouse with mostly outdoor seating, Wi-Fi, and a kitchen turning out surprisingly nice meals on heavy plates with delicate garnishes. For dinner, choose from a variety of huge salads (about $8.50), burgers with a variety of toppings ($8.95), pork tacos with black beans and chipotle aioli ($11), or fish tacos with the same ($12). The market sets the rate for the grilled fish specials ($15 for ahi when I was last there), which are just as good as what other restaurants in Hawaii might charge $10 more for. In the morning, you can laze about sipping Kona coffee while triathletes cycle and run along Alii Drive, or occasionally swim by in the ocean beyond. Try one of the beautiful breakfast wraps, with eggs and your choice of three vegetables, either a la carte ($5.95) or with fried red potatoes and bacon or Portuguese sausage ($8.50)—but no Spam, which is how you know it's not a truly local place.

$–$$ It's not that I don't appreciate a fish taco, but too many Mexican restaurants in Hawaii serve the Americanized version of Mexican cuisine, with a heavy hand on the cheese grater, and healthful fish or tofu fillings displacing traditional chorizo and adobada. That's not the case at **Tacos El Unico Mexican Food** (75–5725 Alii Dr. at the Kona Marketplace; ☎ 808/326-4033), a fairly clean, brightly lit Mexican kitchen where English is the second language, weekends

Kona Coast

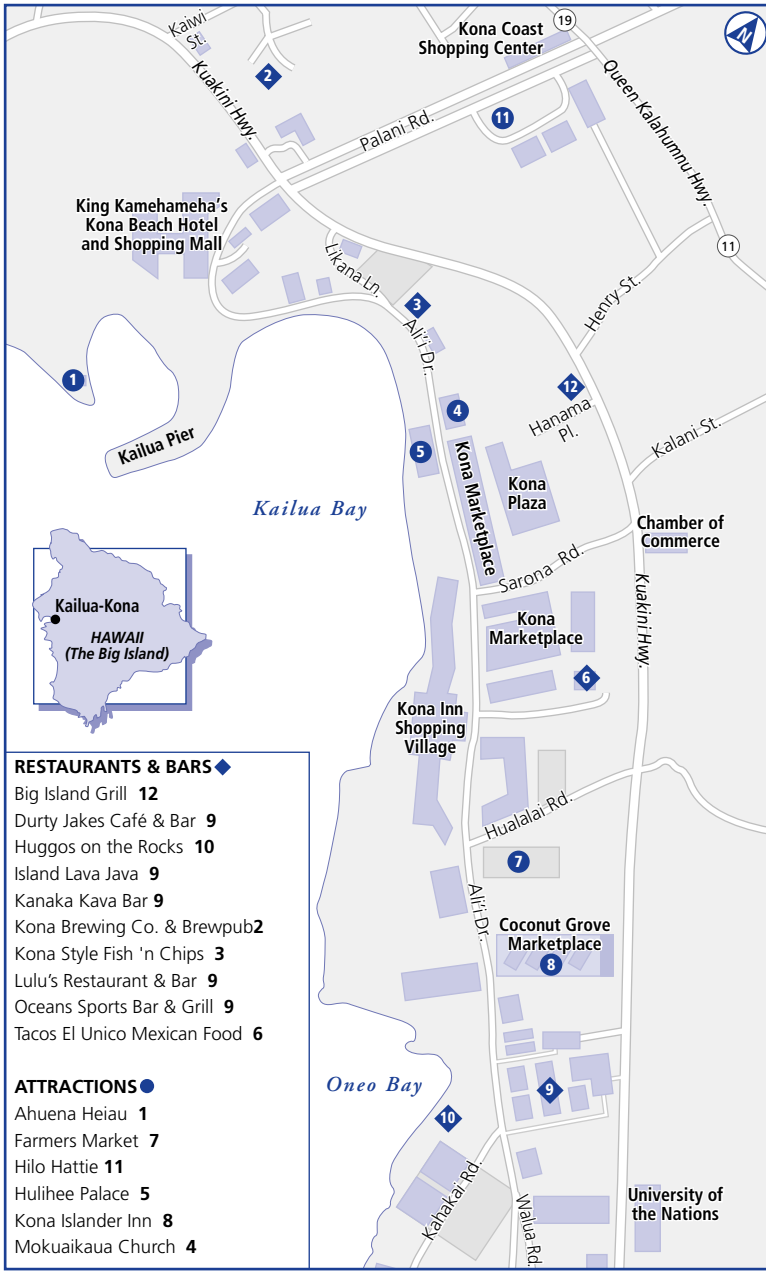


DINING◆

The Coffee Shack **7**
The Harbor House **2**
Manago Hotel Restaurant **6**
Teshima Restaurant **4**

ATTRACTIONS●

Captain Cook Monument **5**
Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park **2**
Kuamo'o Battlefield and Lekeleke Burial Grounds **3**
Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawaii **1**
Puuhonua O Honaunau **9**
Two Step **8**



RESTAURANTS & BARS

Big Island Grill **12**
Durty Jakes Café & Bar **9**
Huggos on the Rocks **10**
Island Lava Java **9**
Kanaka Kava Bar **9**
Kona Brewing Co. & Brewpub **2**
Kona Style Fish 'n Chips **3**
Lulu's Restaurant & Bar **9**
Oceans Sports Bar & Grill **9**
Tacos El Unico Mexican Food **6**

ATTRACTIONS

Ahuena Heiau **1**
Farmers Market **7**
Hilo Hattie **11**
Hulihee Palace **5**
Kona Islander Inn **8**
Mokuaikaua Church **4**

Dining Index

American

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Big Island Grill (Kailua Kona, $$, p. 369)
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Austrian

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Thai

Naung Mai Thai Kitchen (Hilo, $–$$, p. 374)
Ning's Thai Cuisine (Hilo, $$$, p. 378)
Thai Thai Restaurant (Hilo, $$–$$$, p. 378)

Average entree price: $ = $9 or less; $$ = $10 to $15; $$$ = $16 to $21; $$$$ = $22 and up

mean *menudo,* and chorizo, adobada, carnitas, *pollo,* and even *lengua* fill the tacos ($2.50 apiece). Although it's in the heart of Kailua-Kona, it's hidden in the back of the Kona Marketplace, invisible from Alii Drive, so you have to look for it. It's

got counter service and some outdoor seating, as well as free delivery within 2 miles. Pick up a six-pack of Corona, get carryout here, sit by the ocean, and bear in mind that you're dining at 19°N latitude, due west of Mexico City.

$–$$ Manago Hotel Restaurant (heart of the town of Captain Cook; ☎ 808/323-2642; closed Mon; reservations suggested) serves simple, home-style meals in the old dining hall of a hotel founded by a Japanese immigrant in 1917. Everything besides the New York strip ($14) and the sautéed shrimp ($11) costs $10 or less, and comes with steamed rice and three side dishes, such as peas and carrots, broccoli, and squash. This hotel is like an unsealed time capsule from Hawaii's plantation era. While enjoying a meal, you can gather clues for fathoming how those earlier times on the islands have influenced the Hawaii of today. Try the liver, or better yet, the big, fat pork chops (both $8). This place is famous for its pork chops. Say "Manago Hotel Restaurant" to anyone from Kona, and there's a good chance they'll reply, "pork chops."

$$ Teshima Restaurant (79–7251 Mamalahoa Hwy., Honalo; ☎ 808/322-9140; about 15 min. south of Kailua-Kona) has changed little since it opened in 1940. When I visited, 98-year-old Grandma Teshima, who started the place, was still working the floor, wiping off tables, and keeping the rest of the family on its toes. The restaurant, like its proprietress, has a unassuming air, with its straight-backed wooden booths, kitchen tables circa 1950, and proudly displayed artwork by one of the grandsons. For dinner, try the shrimp or vegetable tempura ($13 and $11), or get the beef teriyaki and shrimp tempura ($15). It's on the high end of the menu, but it's worth the splurge.

$$ Located at Honokohau Harbor, where most of Kona's sports-fishing fleet berths, the **Harbor House** (74–425 Kealakehe Pkwy., Kona; ☎ 808/326-4166) is as close to its food suppliers as a seafood restaurant can get. I like the grilled-fish sandwiches ($9.25), tall stacks of bun, lettuce, and fish—mahimahi, ono, or whatever else just came in. The fish and chips ($9.75) and the grilled-fish dinner ($10) are good choices, too. The open-air dining room lets in the warm sea breeze and the rhythmic clanking of halyards on masts, as well as birds looking for french fries. The bar draws a batch of sun-weathered regulars, and serves cold beer in 18-ounce schooners ($2.25 domestic during happy hour, 4–6pm). The Harbor House closes early, most nights at 7pm, and 5:30pm on Sunday, because this is a bona fide fishermen's hangout, and fishermen don't stay up late.

$$ The **Big Island Grill** (75–5702 Kuakini Hwy., 1 block *makai* of tourist central on Alii Dr., Kona; ☎ 808/326-1153) has so many happy local diners seated elbow-to-elbow that there seems to be no room left for decor, unless you consider the happy local diners themselves to be the decor. This popular family spot offers massive sandwiches, burgers, and servings of island favorites such as loco moco (bowl of rice topped with a hamburger patty and a fried egg, then smothered in gravy). If you're given a choice of mashed potatoes, baked potato, or french fries, get the mashers—they're unusually rich and fluffy. Come here only if you have a good appetite and some time—the portions are huge and there's often a wait to get in.

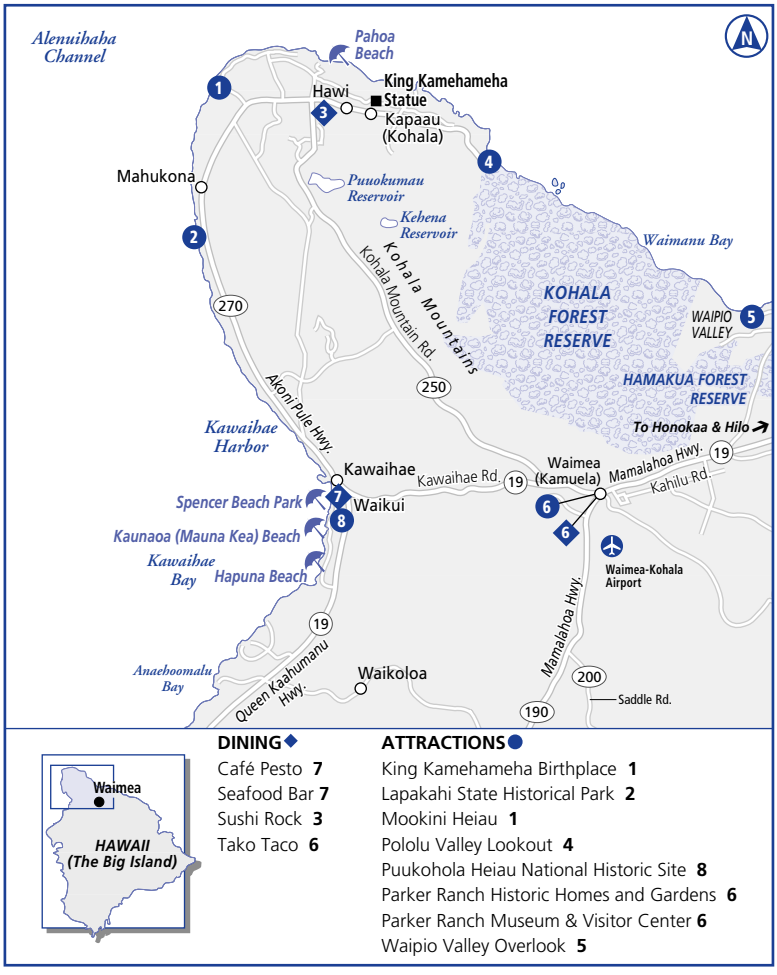
A Splurge with a View, or Pupus with a Sunset

A good sunset dinner can be one of the highlights of a stay in West Hawaii, and **Huggo's** ★★ (75–5828 Kahakai Rd., Kona; ☎ 808/329-1493; www.huggos.com; **$$$–$$$$**) is one of the best restaurants in Kailua-Kona from which to watch the sun's burning bald head slide beneath the wet edge of the Pacific. Pilings sunk into the lava shoreline (county building codes once prevented such a thing) carry Huggo's open dining room out to the very edge of the island, where waves either crash or lap beneath the tables of diners, depending on surf conditions. The servers are warm and attentive, something not to be taken for granted in Kailua-Kona. After the sun goes down and the Tiki torches are lit, the darkened dining areas, laid out across three levels, become even more alluring. The Hawaii Regional Cuisine here includes teriyaki steak ($25, and a long-standing local favorite), seafood linguine with a macadamia-nut pesto and sherry-cream sauce ($30), and ono encrusted with crabmeat mixed with mozzarella and Parmesan cheeses ($33). Instead of a full dinner, you can join the pianist in the lounge, pretend like Huggo's is a tapas bar, and order off the pizza and pupus menu. Do what I recently did with a companion: Order two glasses of the house cabernet sauvignon ($6 apiece), and share the Caesar salad ($8.95), a little skillet of sizzling shrimp ($15 and delicious), and an order of Asian-style mushrooms ($7.95). You'll get the essence of a Huggo's experience for under $50. Plus, you can chat with the piano player.

$$ One of the hallmarks of Kona's coffee-shack architecture is the use of stilts, which enable construction on otherwise impossibly steep slopes. A restaurant called **The Coffee Shack** (83–5799 Mamalahoa Hwy., between mile markers 108 and 109, Captain Cook; ☎ 808/328-9555; www.coffeeshack.com) exemplifies this style, jutting so precipitously over a plunging hillside that it almost seems to float on the vog (volcanic smog, see p. 446) above Kealakekua Bay, far, far below. The clamor of diners on the tiny lanai and in the enclosed little dining room doesn't interfere with the lofty, breezy calm that prevails way up there, but the arrival of the generously prepared pizza or sandwich you ordered can snap you out of a reverie. Try the corned-beef Rueben on fresh-baked rye bread ($8.95), or the 12-inch pepperoni pizza ($12). Sadly, the place closes at 4pm, so sunsets go unseen from this perch.

$$–$$$ For pizza, sandwiches, and microbrews, go to **Kona Brewing Co. & Brewpub** (p. 370), where you'll find standard pub grub and exceptional beer.

$$–$$$$ If you enjoy sushi, you'll appreciate the native selection at **Wasabi's** ★★ kids (Coconut Grove Marketplace, 75–5803 Alii Dr., Kona; ☎ 808/356-2352), which features fish plucked that day from the waters off Hawaii—marlin, ono, ahi, you name it. Tremendously fresh with nightly changing specials, this is a great place for sushi despite the simple decor and rushed service (they try to move you in and out quickly as its usually packed with customers). There's also a children's menu, for those traveling with picky youngsters.



DINING
- Café Pesto **7**
- Seafood Bar **7**
- Sushi Rock **3**
- Tako Taco **6**

ATTRACTIONS
- King Kamehameha Birthplace **1**
- Lapakahi State Historical Park **2**
- Mookini Heiau **1**
- Pololu Valley Lookout **4**
- Puukohola Heiau National Historic Site **8**
- Parker Ranch Historic Homes and Gardens **6**
- Parker Ranch Museum & Visitor Center **6**
- Waipio Valley Overlook **5**

Kawaihae on the Kohala Coast

Kawaihae, site of the west side's only deep draft harbor, is the closest stop for Gold Coast hotel guests who want to get away from their rarified resorts for a meal. A few great eateries have sprung up among the harbor's fishing fleet, shipping containers, and interisland tugs. I have two favorites:

$–$$$ There's something about fried oysters and cold beer on a hot tropical day that puts me into the most pleasant languor, and I know of no better place in Hawaii to get in this condition than **The Seafood Bar** (61–3642 Kawaihae Rd.; ☎ 808/880-9393; www.theseafoodbar.com). It's a cool, shady spot where the walls have been covered with lauhala mats, tiki lights, and Don Ho albums, and the second-story view looks out on the harbor's sunny, industrial landscape. The menu is

heavy on pupus and light fare, such as the black-bean seafood combo—shrimp, scallops, and fish, sautéed with mushrooms and onions, and finished with a black-bean beurre blanc ($15), crispy coconut shrimp with li hing mui piña-colada sauce ($9), and, of course, fried oysters, panko-crusted ($9). I doubt you could go anywhere and find a better seafood bar with enormous fuel silos just across the street.

$$–$$$$ Café Pesto (Kawaihae Shopping Center; ☎ 808/882-1071; www.cafepesto.com; also in Hilo) features Pacific fusion seafood, pastas, organic salads, and wood-fired pizzas with unusual toppings, such as shiitake mushrooms. Try the Pizza Luau: kalua pork, Hawaiian sweet onions, and fresh pineapple ($11 for a 9-in. pie). The least expensive entree, Linguine al Pesto ($15), also happens to be my favorite. It's got grilled smoked-chicken apple sausage with a roasted tomato-basil marinara. This dish, with a wild-green salad ($4.95) and a glass of wine, usually does it for me, though I can't say I haven't been tempted by the Hot Keanakolu Apple Crisp, with a macadamia-nut crumb topping ($5.95).

Waimea & Hawi

The upscale old cowboy town of Waimea, in the heart of Parker Ranch country, has so much fine dining that it's called "The Gourmet Ghetto."

$ For something less expensive, go Mexican. Ordinarily, I would avoid a restaurant with a pun in the name, but not in the case of **Tako Taco** ★ (64–1066 Mamalahoa Hwy., Waimea; ☎ 808/887-1717). This taqueria originally served octopus (*tako* in Japanese) tacos, but they were too hard to chew and taken off the menu. Nonetheless, the name stuck. Try the veggie burrito ($6.25), which comes with black beans, cheese, cabbage, guacamole, and a pico de gallo tomato salsa. Or order the tofu taco ($3.50), which, in addition to the alliteration, has a nice filling marinated in a grilled tomato ranchero sauce.

Rockin' Sushi

On the northernmost tip of the island, in the former sugar town of Hawi, the old plantation-era mom-and-pop mercantiles have given way to galleries, boutiques, and restaurants. The best restaurant is **Sushi Rock** ★★★ (downtown Hawi; ☎ 808/889-5900; closed Wed), which started life as a simple gift shop carrying Asian kitchenware, then had a sushi bar grafted on. You can still buy sake sets, teapots, and fancy chopsticks here, but sushi has become the main attraction. Traditional sushi like unagi nigiri (two savory pieces of freshwater eel, $4) stands alongside original creations like an inside-out roll called the Makai (roasted mahimahi, macadamia nuts, avocado, and scallions rolled in sesame seeds and tobiko, aka flying fish roe; eight pieces for $8). The young and talented chef, unconstrained by formal training in traditional Japanese sushi preparation, has fun with the plate presentations. For a specialty roll he calls the Mauna Loa Eruption, he uses ahi, smoked salmon, and a seasonal Hawaiian white fish to construct a shield volcano, then sends scallion cream and fiery orange tobiko pouring down its sides.

$$$$ It would be a hard choice, but if I had to single out just one of this area's exquisite eateries to recommend, I'd choose **Merriman's Restaurant** ★★★ (62–1227 Opelo Rd., Waimea, ☎ 808/885-6822; also Merriman's Market Café at the Waikoloa Resort, ☎ 808/886-1700), not just because the chef, Peter Merriman—one of the founders of Hawaii Regional Cuisine—is a sort of latter-day demigod in Hawaii. And not because almost everything on the seasonally changing menu was grown, raised, caught, or produced locally, including the goat cheese pâté in the taster platter, the steaks served with morel cream or cabernet and foie gras sauces, and the wok-charred ahi, seared on the outside, sashimi on the inside. I would pick Merriman's because of Wendell Branco, a burly, retired firefighter who supplies the coffee Merriman's serves. If you show up early enough for dinner on Tuesday, you might get to visit Branco at his simple Hamakua Coast ranch, where he raises mules and roasts Hamakua Coast coffee. His **Long Ears Coffee Company** (☎ 808/775-0385) is one of the typical stops on the 4-hour tours Merriman's conducts of farms and ranches from where its food originates. **Merriman's Farm Visits & Diner** ★★★ (☎ 808/885-6822; most Tuesdays) culminates in a four-course meal back at the restaurant. The whole thing costs $125 per person, tax and gratuity included, which for a tour and a meal isn't bad.

IN EAST HAWAII

East Hawaii has many excellent and reasonably priced restaurants.

Hilo

$ I don't know why I like **Bear's Place** ★ (106 Keawe St.; ☎ 808/935-0708), but I do. It has poor coffee, service that varies between happy-to-see-you and I-hate-customers, and a disturbing teddy-bear motif. It also has a strange charm, located as it is in an old downtown building, with sidewalk seating, and a colorful parade of townies, surfers, newspaper junkies, and guests from the nearby Hilo Bay Hostel. This is the place to go for cafe culture, Hilo-style. In the morning, you can get a bagel with peanut butter ($2), or a bagel with lox, cream cheese, onion, and tomato ($6.75). The eggs soufflé atop the espresso machine are okay, but avoid the Big Bad Buster—one egg, spinach, and melted cheese, given a rubbery finish in the microwave. It's easier to like Bear's between 11am and 4pm, when it offers one of the best lunch deals in town: grilled salmon, mahimahi, shrimp scampi, and New York strips, plus pot roast on Tuesday and lamb chops on Monday, all priced at $8.

$–$$ For less ambience and more food, go to **Ken's House of Pancakes** ★★ kids (1730 Kamehameha Ave.; corner of Hwy. 11 and Hwy. 19; ☎ 808/935-8711), a bustling 24-hour diner near the airport and hotels, with plenty of seating. Ken's serves breakfast at all hours, as well as dozens of lunch and dinner entrees. The tiny print on its dense menu resembles the typeface of a phonebook. I like the variations Ken's offers on the traditional loco moco (bowl of rice, hamburger patty, fried egg, and gravy; $5.75), such as the mahimahi loco moco, in which fish takes the place of the burger. For heavy eaters, any moco can be sumo-sized. Sumos come with six scoops of rice, two patties, three eggs, and some fanfare—as it's carried to your table, the cook rings a ship's bell and the whole kitchen cries "Sumo!," ensuring that your appetite won't go unnoticed. Wednesday is prime-rib night (8 oz. $15, 12 oz. $16), Tuesday is all-you-can-eat taco night (adults $9.95,

Dining Hours

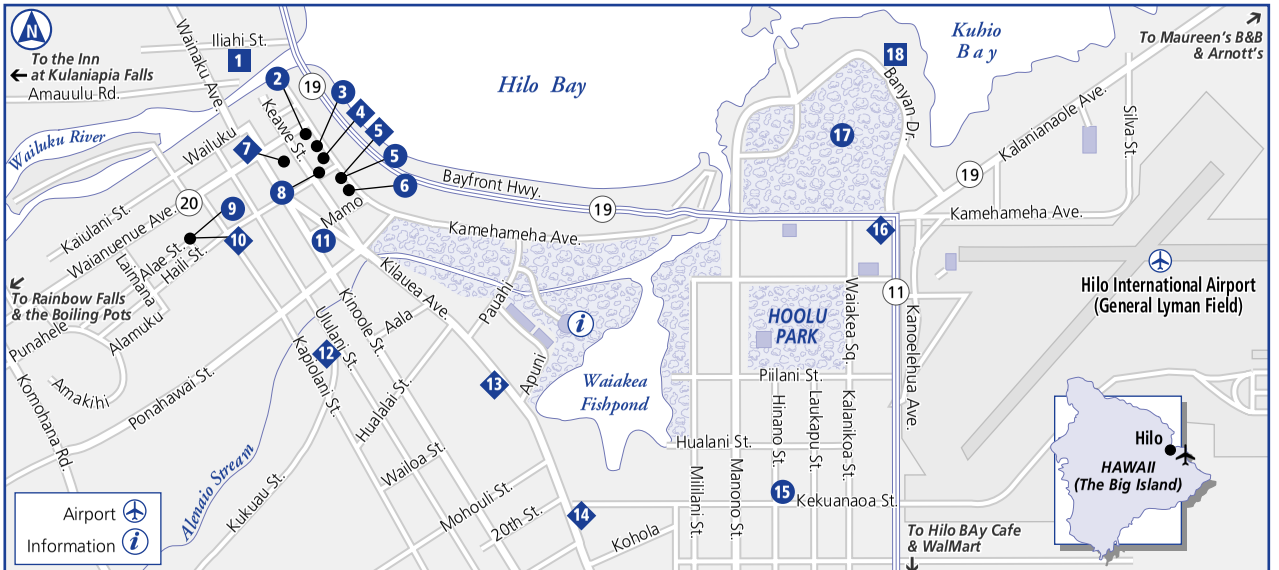
In Hawaii, lunch tends to be served from 11am to 2pm; dinner from 5 until 9 or 10pm. In this section, only exceptions to this general rule are noted.

kids $6.25), Sunday is all-you-can-eat spaghetti ($9.25 adults, $6.25 kids), and Thursday showcases Hawaiian food (the price varies).

$–$$$ Hidden away on a back street of downtown Hilo, **Garden Snack Club** (82 Kilauea Ave.; ☎ 808/933-9664; BYOB, with no corkage fee) is a humble sit-down or carryout place with long waits for your food and big payoffs when it finally comes. The Snack Club has a passionate following of Hilo diners hooked on its healthy, unusual specialties, such the garlic-shrimp sandwich (served with organic greens, cucumber, tomato, and pineapple; $7), or Ocean in the Jungle (salmon, squid, shrimp, and pineapple served over spinach with curry sauce; $16). The owner, Tina, comes from Thailand. But the food is really a cuisine unto itself, one which Tina invented in her woks and skillets, with lots of spinach and sweet potatoes and carrots. Try her Thai pizza—spinach, Thai basil, pineapple, onion, red curry, coconut milk, and cheddar cheese layered between two spinach tortillas, like a giant curried quesadilla. It comes with tofu ($10), shrimp ($12), or fish ($15). It's big enough for two, and good enough for you to try and re-create when you get home. ***A word to the wise:*** Tina takes her time when she cooks. If you have any time constraints, call your order in before you arrive. Or bring a bottle of wine and enjoy the wait.

$–$$ Right next door to the Garden Snack Club is another tiny eatery with a big following, **Naung Mai Thai Kitchen** (86 Kilauea Ave.; ☎ 808/934-7540; closed Sun; reservations suggested; BYOB, with no corkage fee). Naung Mai does delightful things with a traditional Thai menu—cucumber salads, tom yum soups, pad Thai—and it doesn't put MSG in any of the food. I'm particularly fond of the beef massaman curry. All the curries come with a vegetarian, chicken, beef, pork, or shrimp option, and all cost less than $10, unless you go with shrimp, in which case the price jumps to $12. Naung Mai's small kitchen opens onto its small dining room, which has three high-backed booths and five little tables, each with finely textured Thai silk tablecloths beneath glass overlays and warm spotlighting. This is a nice place for a quiet, intimate evening, where you can drink whatever beer or wine you carry in the door.

$–$$ On the edge of tranquil Waiakea Pond, behind the sprawling and seedy Waiakea Villas condominium complex, is the untraditional and obscurely located Japanese restaurant **Miyo's** (400 Hualani St.; ☎ 808/935-2273). To find it, look for a bar called Our Karaoke; Miyo's is in the building right behind it, upstairs. When you enter Miyo's for the first time, you feel as if you've stepped into some back-alley, Japanese hippy, BYOB, speakeasy, hidden from the general public but filled with those in-the-know. The fare is traditional Japanese with a stop-over at an organic farm, where a pile of fresh mixed greens were loaded aboard most entrees. The tempura-and-sesame-chicken dish ($9.75) hits the spot



ACCOMMODATIONS ■
Uncle Billy's **18**
Dolphin Bay Hotel **1**

RESTAURANTS & BARS ◆
Bear's Place **7**
Café Pesto **5**
Garden Snack Club **10**
Henri's on Kapiolani **12**
Ken's House of Pancakes **16**
Naung Mai Thai Kitchen **10**
Nichols Public House **13**
Puka Puka Kitchen **4**
Restaurant Miwa **14**

ATTRACTIONS ●
Big Island Candies **15**
Hilo Farmers Market **6**
Kahuina Gallery **11**
Lyman Mission House & Museum **9**
Mokupapapa Discovery Center for Hawaii's Remote Coral Reefs **5**
Pacific Tsunami Museum **3**
Palace Theater **8**
Naniloa Country Club and Driving Range **17**
Yoga Centered **2**

while leaving you light on your feet. The salad special with broiled mackerel ($7.95) is an even lighter but still satisfying way to go. Lunches here are cheaper, and the daylight offers nice views of the pond and its oddball collection of waterfowl, including some wayward Canadian geese, who seem to have given up on migration after making the major navigational error that landed them here.

$–$$ *Puka* means "hole" in Hawaiian, and **Puka Puka Kitchen** ★★★ (270 Kamehameha Ave.; ☎ 808/933-2121) is a hole-in-the-wall lunch spot along the Bay Front area of downtown Hilo. With its three-table dining room, Puka Puka is the runt of Hilo's downtown restaurant litter, though one with culinary gifts and talents far in excess of its tiny stature. I'm crazy for the pitas with lamb or falafel here, as well as with ahi, beef, or chicken ($5–$6.50). I also go nuts over the plates of sauteed ahi ($8.75) or sauteed lamb ($9.50), served with delicious sauteed rice, a mountain of greens, and a beautiful plate presentation.

$$–$$$ The sushi chef at **Restaurant Miwa** ★★ (1261 Kilauea Ave., Suite 230, corner of Kekuanaoa St.; ☎ 808/961-4454; closed Sun), is a quiet, circumspect guy named Shigeo. He's also the owner, and a regular face at both the Suisan Company Ltd.'s fish auction, where he picks up fresh ahi before dawn, and at the Hilo Farmers Market, where he loads up on fresh produce. From his sushi bar, get the combination platter (market price), and let Shigeo decide what's best. The other items on the menu are okay, but the sushi and the haupia cream-cheese pie for dessert ($4) really stand out. Haupia is a Hawaiian custardlike treat made with coconut and sugar, and the haupia cream-cheese pie alone is worth the effort it takes to get to Restaurant Miwa (it's in an obscure spot, at the end of a dark hall in the elbow of the L-shaped Hilo Shopping Center). Don't try to share a slice of the haupia cream-cheese pie with someone—you'll just end up fighting for the last bite, or resenting that you gave it up.

Grazing at the Farmers Market

Twice a week you can grab a bite or gather the makings of a picnic at **Hilo Farmers Market** (corner of Mamo St. and Kamehameha Ave.; ☎ 808/933-1000; Sat and Wed, crack of dawn until 3pm; **$**). Not only will you find the Big Island's entire lineup of locally grown produce, but you can also purchase Japanese bentos (box lunches); Spam *musubi* (a slice of Spam tied to a Spam-shaped block of rice with a belt of dried seaweed—don't knock it 'till you try it); Peruvian tamales (chicken, cheese, or tofu, sold by a grumpy Peruvian woman); plus hot Samoan, Filipino, and Hawaiian plate lunches (all for less than $8). For beverages, there's fresh carrot juice, spirulina drinks, and sometimes a kid with a machete opening coconuts and sticking straws in them so you can sip the sweet milk inside. For dessert, try a mango, a tangerine, or the exotic Southeast Asian rambutan, which is like an enormous grape inside of a rubbery husk covered with red tentacles. It's good. Honest.

The Big Island's Best Steakhouse is Also its Weirdest

Henri's on Kapiolani ★★ (139 Kapiolani St.; ☎ 808/961-9272; Mon–Sat 5–7pm; reservations strongly recommended; **$$–$$$**) arguably is the best place on the Big Island to get a steak. It is without question the oddest. First of all, it has extremely limited hours, keeps a low profile, and is in such a strange location—hidden atop a nondescript three-story walk-up apartment building in a back neighborhood—that only a handful of Hilo residents know it exists. Second, Henri and his waitstaff hate it when people show up without reservations, even when the place is empty. Third, the menu is written in an enormous Gothic font that leaves room for just four entrees. When I ate here, only two of them were available—the T-bone steak ($15) and the porterhouse steak ($17), both served with rice and a small iceberg lettuce salad. (I had the porterhouse, and I'm looking forward to the day I go back and have it again.) Fourth, there's the 1970s-time-capsule decor. Fifth, there's Tiny, Henri's friendly, needle-toothed little dog, who may tug at your pant leg if not shooed away. Finally, there's Henri. If a drowsy, shirtless, pot-bellied guy wanders into the dining room and plops down at the head of a table full of regulars, that's him. Henri's is not for everyone. But for those who love red meat and can handle eccentricity, it's a great place. Just don't forget to make reservations.

$–$$$$ Hilo's hippest eatery is a small bistro tucked between two cellphone stores at a shopping center dominated by Wal-Mart and OfficeMax. This may seem like an unlikely location for anything even remotely hip, but the **Hilo Bay Cafe** ★ (315 Makaala St.; ☎ 808/935-4939; at the Waiakea Center) is too hip to care. The menu reflects the chef's strong San Francisco, Asian, and regional Hawaiian influences, as well as his Midwestern roots (appetizers include ricotta tater tots with a Hawaiian ohelo-berry-and-jalapeno-pepper marmalade). The kitchen works on two tiers: an upper one, where it prepares entrees like the potato-crusted fresh catch, a top grade of fish seared in a sheath of rough chopped potatoes and served with a beurre blanc sauce ($18); and a more affordable one, where you'll find an enormous chicken or vegan pot pie with a marvelously flaky crust ($8). The warm, sensuous lighting and the minimalist, contemporary decor help everyone and everything look their best. Thanks to the darkly tinted windows, after a few glasses of something from the well-rounded wine list, you'll forget all about the box stores outside.

Pahoa

$$$ Hilo used to have an extraordinary Thai restaurant on Mamo Street called Royal Siam. It's still there, but it lost all appeal when the cook, Ning, left in 2002. Fortunately, for those who were hooked on Royal Siam's curry, she didn't go far: just down to the little town of Pahoa in the Puna District, where she opened her

own restaurant, **Ning's Thai Cuisine** (15–2955 Pahoa Rd., in the heart of the little downtown; ☎ 808/965-7611). Grab a table and have some summer rolls with peanut sauce, while you wait for the curry (massaman, red, yellow, or green) that causes so many of her Hilo followers to forsake Royal Siam for the half-hour drive to Pahoa. Split the curry with someone so you have room for the Evil Jungle Prince, cooked with garlic and coconut milk, mushrooms, bell peppers, basil, and either tofu, chicken, beef, pork, or seafood. Ning's softly cheerful presence fills her kitchen and small, warmly lit dining room, which opens directly onto the Pahoa's Old West–style boardwalk, and is adorned with elephants, Buddhas, and, for some reason, photos of Jimmy Stewart.

In or Near Volcano Village

$$–$$$ Kiawe Kitchen ★ (next to The Volcano Store, corner of Old Volcano Rd. and Haunani Rd.; ☎ 808/967-7711) serves huge sandwiches at lunch ($10–$12), huge pastas at dinner ($17–$22), and huge salads at lunch and dinner ($5–$12). *Kiawe* is the Hawaiian word for mesquite, and it burns in the brick oven where the pizzas bake, with their crispy, cracker-thin crusts ($13–$15, plus toppings). I found the white pizza, with olive oil, garlic, fresh mozzarella, and pecorino Romano cheese, to be absolutely delicious—and I don't particularly like pizza. The couple sitting next to me said the red sauce on their pizza lacked zest, but they were from Louisiana. Sandwiches include roast lamb, out of the same oven, laid on a freshly baked baguette, drizzled with aioli, and served with a big side salad. The warm lighting in Kiawe Kitchen's small dining room, the tomato-soup-colored walls, and the soft jazz of a Seattle Internet radio station in the background give this place a comforting, happy-to-be-in-Volcano feeling.

$$–$$$ Thai Thai Restaurant (19–4084 Old Volcano Rd.; ☎ 808/967-7969; 4–9pm) is a well-regarded place that does a bustling dinner business in a less-relaxed setting than Kiawe Kitchen. All entrees run between $10 and $16. Thai Thai Curry with Mahi-Mahi is the signature dish, and a pretty good one, for $16. You can get the exact same thing with chicken, beef, pork, or tofu, and it costs only $10. My favorite is the eggplant with basil entree, to which I like to add beef ($11).

$$$$ Albert Jeyte was once a Hollywood makeup artist. He won an Emmy for his work on the old Hawaii-based detective show *Magnum P.I.* Now he's a chef and restaurateur, and he's created one of the best restaurants, with one of the most unique menus, on the Big Island. At his **Kilauea Lodge** ★★★ (Old Volcano Hwy.; ☎ 808/967-7366; www.kilauealodge.com), you'll find traditional German dishes, such as hasenpfeffer (braised rabbit), along with French classics such as duck *l'orange* and paupiettes of beef (both $28), and some choices even more exotic to Hawaii, such as venison ($32) and ostrich filet ($33). You might guess as I did, incorrectly, that ostrich tastes something like chicken. It actually tastes more like beef, really tender beef, and if it's on the menu when you're here, I recommend it. Kilauea Lodge occupies an old Boy Scout lodge in the misty rainforest near the entrance to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. It's filled with warm lighting and luxurious native hardwoods, and when the temperature drops, the Scouts' old "Friendship Fireplace," built with stones from around the world, is stoked. Jeyte also runs a bed-and-breakfast here.

WHY YOU'RE HERE: THE BIG ISLAND'S BEACHES

The Big Island has a large supply of beaches, but they differ dramatically according to the area where they're found.

THE WEST SIDE

The west side has almost all of the island's white- and golden-sand beaches. What follows is a guide to the best of this area's places to swim, snorkel, and lounge by the sea, starting in the south and working up the coast.

South Kona District

The ancient Place of Refuge, **Two Step** kids ★ (Keala O Keawe Rd., off Hwy. 11 at mile marker 104, south of Kailua-Kona; just north of Puuhonua O Honaunau National Historic Park) teems with snorkelers, scuba divers, and skin divers drawn to its coral reef, clear waters, sudden near-shore drop-off, and turtle cleaning station. Located in **Honaunau Bay,** Two Step has a tiny, sandy beach, beside a boat ramp, where parents let children loose. Apart from this sheltered beach, the shore is dominated by a broad, smooth, rock ledge, where most beachgoers set up their beach chairs and towels if they're not at one of the few picnic tables under the trees. The ledge drops straight into 15 feet of water, and within a few hundred yards from shore the bottom drops precipitously. Free divers from around the world, who descend to depths of 200 feet and more while holding their breaths, train here throughout the year and sometimes hold competitions where world records are set. Two Step takes its name from a giant steplike formation in the lava, which makes it easy to get in and out of the water here. At the turtle cleaning station, green sea turtles lie motionlessly on the seafloor while brightly colored reef fish nibble the algae off their shells. To witness this hygiene-for-greens arrangement, start at the giant lava step and swim about 150 feet offshore toward the tip of Honaunau Bay's southern point; if the cleaning station is in operation, you can swim right over it.

North Kona District

Kahaluu Beach Park kids (south of Kailua-Kona on Alii Dr., at mile marker 5) is an easily accessible salt-and-pepper beach set along a rocky shore. There are tide pools for kids, protected waters with decent snorkeling, plenty of turtles, plenty of parking, plenty of other beachgoers, and a nearby surf spot that's good for beginners. The rocky bottom here makes Kahaluu better suited to snorkeling and turtle watching than swimming, but you can swim safely if you watch your toes. If you need beach gear or hot dogs, you'll find them here. On the lava flat to the south, several ancient Hawaiian petroglyphs appear at low tide. They include human figures, abstract designs, and phalluses.

The Big Island's ficklest beach, **White Sands Beach Park** (south on Alii Dr., mile marker 4), comes and goes with the big winter swells, which is how it got its popular name, **Magic Sands Beach,** or sometimes **Disappearing Sands Beach.** When the sand vanishes, a forbidding rocky cove remains. When the sand reappears, it takes the form of a short, broad beach, which draws hundreds of people to bodysurf, boogie board, sunbathe, and play beach volleyball. This is Kailua-Kona's foremost bodysurfing beach, and a good spot to get a taste of Kona's surf

Don't Touch the Turtles

Warning: State and federal laws protect Hawaii's turtles from harassment with big fines, so look but don't touch. And give them space. Occasionally, good Samaritans try to help turtles onshore back into the water, mistaking egg-laden females who are staking out nesting grounds in their slow, turtlelike way for stranded turtles. It's always hands-off when it comes to turtles.

culture, if you can time your appearance to coincide with the sand and the waves. The waves break suddenly and violently, waiting until they've almost reached shore before shoaling up and exploding all at once in the shallows.

Water safety tip: Study the ocean here before going in (not a bad idea at any beach). Long lulls between wave sets can give you a false impression of calm seas, a mistake you discover only after you've been lured out and the terrifying mountains of water start rolling in. Even small waves here can give you a good thrashing.

If you have a four-wheel-drive vehicle (and don't mind violating the rental-car agreement that prohibits you from taking it off-road), or you're up for a 2-mile hike across a lava desert to a tropical oasis of a beach, go to **Mahaiula Beach** ✯✯✯ (off Hwy. 19 at sign for KEKAHAKAI STATE PARK, near mile marker 90). It's a gentle 600-foot crescent of golden sand, with overhanging trees casting shade along one edge and turquoise waters lapping along the other. The difficulty of getting here keeps the crowds away, and the beach is long enough for everyone who does show up to have space to themselves. The hike takes a little determination and a lot of bottled water, and the slow drive is along one of the most hellish roads on the island. At the end, there's a parking lot with some port-a-potties, but no drinking water—so bring your own supply. The beach is about a 10-minute walk north from the parking lot. Wild billy goats frequent the area, staring blankly at the beachgoers.

If Mahaiula Beach isn't quite remote enough for you, hike northward along the coast for about 20 minutes to **Makalawena Beach** ✯✯✯ (at the end of Mahaiula Beach, take the trail that runs past the old rusty water tower). The beach has two big white-sand coves, with a minicove in between them, and fingers of lava jutting out here and there. If you find anyone here, they'll only be a few intrepid beachgoers like yourselves, unless there's a swell, and then the surfers turn up, too. It takes fortitude to get to this beach, and it's well rewarded.

Further north you'll find more beautiful beaches that require neither four-wheel-drive nor grueling treks across the lava to get to. The first one you'll hit is **Kua Bay** ✯ (Hwy. 19 at mile marker 88, across from West Hawaii Veteran Cemetery, open 9am–7pm), which has a short sandy beach that's popular with bodysurfers. Underwater pinnacles attract fish and snorkelers off the north point. The beach is backed by sandy ledges set among the lava rock like box seats in a theater. There are Hawaiian village ruins behind the beach, along with brand-new restrooms and showers, a newly paved parking lot, and a newly paved road connecting it all to

the highway. The blacktop has brought more people to Kua Bay than when it was at the end of a rough dirt road, but it's still beautiful.

South Kohala

When Hawaiian royalty sailed along the South Kohala coast, they stopped at **Anaehoomalu Bay,** aka **A-Bay** kids ★ (at Waikokloa Beach Resort, off Hwy. 19 at mile marker 76; open from dawn until dusk), where a large fishpond was stocked with mullet, just for them. The fishpond is still there, as is the long sandy beach where the canoes landed. The beach is backed by a palm grove, and shared by the general public with guests of the Marriott and other hotels at the Waikoloa Beach Resort. **Ocean Sports** (☎ 808/886-6666), a beach concession service, rents windsurfers, sailboats, kayaks, snorkeling gear, and hydro-bikes, and it offers sunset cruises and whale-watching tours. The waters here are well protected and especially good for children. You can eat nearby at Kings' Shops, which you'll pass on the way in. You'll also pass the **Waikoloa Petroglyph Preserve** (p. 386), a highly recommended (and free!) stop. Anaehoomalu Bay takes it name from its ancient use: *anae* meaning mullet, and *hoomalu* meaning protected.

Next, you'll come to **Puako Beach Drive** kids (off Hwy. 19 near mile marker 70), where a collection of condos and beach houses sits on a scenic cove, and where blue beach-access signs mark the public access ways to the water. The beachfront is a mixture of jagged lava and sand, with great deep-water snorkeling and diving for those comfortable getting in and out of the water on the rocks. You can often walk down one of the beach access ways here and find that you're the only ones on the beach. For kids, there are plenty of tide pools to explore.

Waialea Beach, aka **69 Beach** kids (Hwy. 19 to Puako Beach Dr., then right on Old Puako Rd.) is really like three beaches: a small sandy cove to the north, a rocky area in the middle, and a sandy stretch to the south. There are plenty of trees for shade, including some gnarled ones that lie in the water at high tide. The water is usually pretty gentle and good for kids, and there are newly installed restrooms and a shower. Before the parking lot was paved and a sign put up, finding this beach involved locating telephone pole no. 71, which, before the county did some renumbering, was once telephone pole no. 69, the beach's namesake. Four telephone poles to the north, you'll find a path leading to **67 Beach,** a smaller, more remote beach where nudism prevails by convention, if not county sanction.

Hapuna Beach State Park ★★★ kids (Hwy. 19 near mile marker 69, just south of Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel) is one of the best-loved and worst-kept beaches on the island. A finger of lava divides the beach in two. The longer south part fronts a county beach park, which has some shabby but popular nonetheless A-frame cabins you can rent (p. 362). The north part of the beach fronts the luxurious Hapuna Prince Hotel, which puts out lounge chairs on the public beach for its guests. The hotel keeps its property in top shape, but the county, unfortunately, doesn't. The beach park is known for having one of the most beautiful beaches, but some of the most disgusting restrooms, on the Big Island—though last time I checked, they weren't nearly as bad as the time before that.

Mauna Kea Beach, aka **Kaunaoa Beach** ★ (at Mauna Kea Beach Hotel, Hwy. 19 near mile marker 68) is a long, perfect crescent of sand, with gentle swimming waters, snorkeling areas, and plenty of turtles. Unlike nearby Hapuna Beach, where a resort hotel keeps off to itself at one end, this beach is dominated by a

resort hotel, the Mauna Kea Beach Hotel. You might get the feeling here that the hotel thinks it owns the beach, but keep in mind that there are no privately owned beaches in Hawaii—all are open to the public. Still, there's no state or county parking lot here, and the hotel has set aside just 42 public parking spots, which fill up fast. The trick here is to show up early, especially on weekends.

A protective reef and a breakwater built for the harbor at Kawaihae shelter the waters at **Spencer Beach Park** kids (Hwy. 270, between mile markers 2 and 3), making them ideal for young swimmers. This sunny park, popular with local families, has restrooms, barbecue grills, a basketball court, lots of sand, and some snorkeling possibilities at the rocky south end. A short walk down the trail gets you to **Puukohola Heiau,** looming on the hillside nearby (p. 389). The kids will like its beach, and you can explain the historic site's immense importance to them.

North Kohala

Highway 270 in North Kohala hooks around the northern tip of the island from the west side to the east side, ending at Pololu Valley, where you'll find **Pololu Beach** and **Pololu Valley Lookout** (end of Hwy. 270). The swimming is terrible, but the beachcombing is the best on the island. A steep trail takes you down into the valley (about a 20-to-30-min. hike) to a long, rough windward beach, littered with driftwood and other flotsam. On rare occasions, the flotsam includes old blue-green glass balls that Japanese fishermen once used as fishing floats. These increasingly rare floats broke loose from their nets decades ago and have been doing laps around the North Pacific ever since, riding along with the clockwise current that runs west along the equator, up to Alaska past Japan, down the west coast of the Americas, and back along the equator again. The water is rough and dangerous and I'd recommend staying out of it. (***Note:*** This is really an east-side beach, but since it's only accessible through the west side, I've stuck it with the other west-side beaches.)

THE EAST SIDE

Beaches are rare on the rugged east side of the island. What beaches there are tend toward black sand, if they have any sand at all, and many have chilly freshwater springs just offshore, making the water colder than you might expect in Hawaii. Still, the beaches of east Hawaii, fronting a stretch of ocean unbroken until Central America, are lovely and well worth seeking out.

The cold, rocky waters of **Honolii Cove** (Hwy. 19, turn at Alae Point subdivision, 1 mile north of Hilo) make for dreadful swimming, but the year-round northeast trade-wind swell makes it the most consistent surf spot on the Big Island. In Hawaiian legend, this is where the mischievous demigod Maui died, after turning into an eel, chasing a girl up a tree, and getting smashed to pieces by a *kahuna* with a club. Nowadays, the only shape-shifting going on involves the black sand, which occasionally changes from a river-mouth sand spit into a offshore sand bar, then back again. Up on the bluff, where everyone parks along the road, surfer boys chase surfer girls, and vice versa, with no kahunas around anymore to foul things up. When the sand is gone, there's a nice grassy area, as well as a tire swing hanging from a tree.

Onekahakaha Beach Park kids (Kalanianaole Ave., about a mile past entrance to Hilo Harbor) has a broad, sheltered, sandy-bottomed swimming area behind a hefty break wall of boulders, which subdue an otherwise tumultuous ocean and

calm the water enough to teach an infant to swim. There are also some nice tide pools to explore, which kids love, plenty of parking, and an old Hawaiian graveyard nearby with ceramic photos of some of the occupants on their headstones.

The proper name for the next beach you'll come to is **James Kealoha Beach Park,** but everybody calls it **Four Mile** ★ (Kalanianaole Ave., 2 miles past the Hilo Harbor entrance). You can sit on the cool green grass here, or on a warm, smooth lava rock, but the only sand you'll find is on the bottom of the lagoon, which is sheltered by a small island and some rocky reef. Freshwater springs make swimming a brisk affair, especially at low tide when the warmer seawater is in retreat. The easiest way to get in and out of the water is via a short flight of metal steps at the end of the park closest to the open ocean. This beach is precisely 4 miles from Hilo's downtown post office, which is the zero point for measuring distances from the city.

Further down the road is a beach that could be called Five Mile but is instead known as **Richardson's** ★★ (Kalaniaole Ave., a mile past Four Mile). It's a popular spot with ancient Hawaiian fishponds, a tiny pocket of sand where you can get in and out of the water easily, lots of rocky shore, good snorkeling, and boogie boarding over a shallow, razor-sharp reef. The graceful but somewhat forlorn old house, with the mini police station and the Aquatics Division of the State Department of Land and Natural Resources, was once a private home. It was built with wide doors in the front and back so that when tsunamis hit, they could rush through the structure without sweeping it away.

Puna District

Along the Puna District's vast, wild coastline, there's a beach park with a pond in it where seawater mixes with fresh, volcanically heated spring water. The temperature

A Beach Is Born

The 1990 lava flow that destroyed the fishing village at Kalapana also wiped out the famous black-sand beach at Kaimu. That much-loved and -photographed beach, along with the coastline it occupied, now lies beneath about 70 feet of lava. However, you can visit the new **black-sand beach forming at Kaimu** ★★ (where Hwy. 137 dead ends at the lava flow, just past the intersection with Ahia Rd.), not far from where the old one was. Highway 137 ends at a place known as Uncle Robert's (p. 408), where there's an outdoor exhibit illustrating the destruction of Kalapana and the beach, as well as an *awa* bar. Uncle Robert's place was on the edge of Kalapana and was just missed by the flow.

From the parking area, follow the trail across the lava field, about 15 minutes (although this isn't a good hike for you if you have bad ankles). Hundreds of young coconut trees have been planted along the way, but they grow slowly on the arid landscape. The beach itself is hot and shadeless, with a steep drop-off into a rough ocean wracked with dangerous currents. Although swimming here isn't safe, it's fascinating to sit for a while on the baking hot sand at one of the rawest, newest beaches on the planet.

in the pond at **Ahalanui Beach Park** (2 miles south on Hwy. 137 from intersection of Pahoa-Kapoho Rd.) varies from disappointingly warm to startlingly hot. It's hottest during low tide, when the cooler seawater subsides. There's a lifeguard, restrooms, and showers, plus occasional closures when bacteria contaminates the heavily used pond. The ebb and flow of the tides generally keeps the pond pretty clean, though. The park closes at night, which is a shame because it would be a wonderful place to sneak into under a full moon and exchange *watsu* (Japanese water massage) with someone you're sweet on. Or so one imagines.

Further south from the hot pond is **Isaac Hale Beach Park,** aka **Pohoiki** (junction of Hwy. 137 Pohoiki Rd.). This spot, with its variety of surf breaks, is the center of the Puna surf scene. While it's a good place for a quick stop to check the waves and maybe inspect a port-a-potty, it's a lousy place to swim and a dangerous place for novice surfers to paddle out. The unpaved parking lot, one of Puna's social centers, isn't the most inviting spot for visitors to hang out, but it's all you'll find here. Still, if there's a good south swell running, it's fun to watch the surfers for a while.

Further south, you'll come to **Kahena Beach** (Hwy. 137 near mile marker 19). You'll know it because there's a cliff-side lookout here with a few parking spots, and all sorts of overflow parking on either side of the road. This is Puna's nude beach, and another social center, as well as one of the few beaches you'll ever find born during the baby boom in 1955. A massive lava flow poured into the ocean nearby, forming the jagged black point to the east. As the flow hit the sea, steam explosions threw up tons of glassy, sand-size ash, which accumulated here and created this black-sand beach. In 1975, when an immense earthquake altered the Puna and Kau coastline, Kahena Beach dropped by about 3 feet. The sand remained, however, and the nudists never stopped coming. Nowadays, leathery hippies older than the beach itself share the sand and shade beneath the ironwoods with nouveau tribalists, nubile students from the University of Hawaii at Hilo, an ever-present contingent of gay sunbathers, and a regular parade of passing freaks and gawkers (weekends are the worst).

The swimming here can be treacherous, with a sharp drop-off promoting rip currents and powerful breakers rolling ankle-smashing rocks up and down the steep beach. Some days are so rough that waves wash over the entire beach, forcing it to close down. On calm days, the deep blue ocean just offshore is hard to resist, and the occasional pod of spinner dolphins passes by. On Sunday, a drum circle materializes and carries the beat into the night.

Kau District

Twenty-seven miles south from the entrance to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, along the vast, undeveloped coastline of the Kau District, you'll find **Punaluu Beach Park** (Hwy. 11 to Punaluu Road near mile marker 56). It has a gorgeous black-sand beach you can drive up to, generally rough water made cold by underwater springs, and a rich history. *Punaluu* means "spring dived for," and was so named because the ancient Hawaiians used to plug gourds with their fingers, dive with them to the underwater springs, and fill them up with fresh water from the seafloor. There's plenty here to see, including a large *heiau* (temple) on the northeast point, the ruins of a sugar mill, the ruins of a failed Polynesian-style tourist trap, and a little monument to the first Hawaiian Christian, Henry Opukahaia. After seeing his parents killed in a war raid, and later suspecting that the kahuna

A Cutworm's Comeuppance

The unusual flat-topped hills located a few miles inland from **Punaluu Beach Park** were once ridges, which erosion has long since cut into segments. Hawaiian legend attaches its own significance to the hills: Punaluu, a beautiful young woman who once lived here, married a handsome stranger, who was secretly a shape shifter. At night he would turn into a cutworm and inch off to feast on sweet-potato leaves. After changing back into human form, he'd sleep all day, doing nothing to provide for his wife. When he caught Punaluu spying on him, he destroyed all the sweet-potato patches in the area. The aggrieved populace then appealed to the god Kane, who killed the shiftless shape shifter and chopped him into pieces, reminiscent of the flat-topped hills visible from Punaluu Beach Park today.

had him in mind as a prospective human sacrifice, a young Opukahaia swam out to a passing fur trader anchored here in 1809 and signed on as a cabin boy. He embraced Christianity, attended school in New England, started translating the Bible into Hawaiian, and died of typhoid fever, inspiring the first wave of young missionaries who set off for Hawaii a few years later. (Opukahaia himself was buried in Connecticut for 185 years before he finally got back to Hawaii.) Green sea turtles gather at Punaluu, and the occasional hawksbill turtle, the rarest turtle in the Pacific, nests here in the spring and summer. When the hawksbills show up, so do volunteers with the Hawksbill Turtle Monitoring Program, who sit with the nests and protect them from predators and misplaced human footsteps.

Black isn't the only unusual color that Big Island beaches come in. They also come in green. Like the eroding iron-rich cinder cone nourishing a red-sand beach on Maui, an eroding cinder cone rich in olivine, a glassy, olive-green mineral, gives the black sand at this Big Island beach its unusual tint. Located near South Point, the southernmost tip of both the United States and the island, **Green Sands Beach** (take South Point Rd. to the fork and bear left; go until road ends at the boat ramp; by foot, follow the rutted trail 2½ miles to the cliffs, then pick your way down the trail to the beach) takes some effort to get to. Most car-rental companies won't cover you if your car breaks down out here or if it's broken into, and break-ins aren't uncommon. The area's remote and windblown, with treacherous waters much of the time, especially if you get very far from shore, where swift currents whip whatever they find near shore far out to sea. During big south swells, waves sometimes inundate the beach, closing it entirely. It has no facilities or shade, and it takes a good 40 minutes to hike to. But in spite of these drawbacks, it gets a fair share of visitors, drawn by the wildness and the novelty of lounging on green sand.

THE TOP SIGHTS & ATTRACTIONS

I'll deal first with the historical and cultural sites, then with the natural wonders.

WEST HAWAII

History comes first. The Big Island has more ancient Hawaiian sites, and more easily accessible ancient Hawaiian sites, than any of the other islands. Among

these are petroglyph fields, where Hawaiians carved enduring images and designs in smooth *pahoehoe* lava.

Historical Sights

Where you find one petroglyph, you usually find many more, not unlike graffiti. The most extensive accumulation of these carvings in the Pacific is at the **Puako Petroglyph Archeological District** ★ kids (at the Mauna Lani Resort, Hwy. 11 between mile markers 73 and 74; follow signs to parking area; walk about ½ mile along marked trail). About 3,000 carvings have been found here, including paddlers, marchers, dancers, dogs, chickens, turtles, and Polynesian crab-claw sails. The earliest carvings date to around A.D. 1200, and the latest—such as images of the horses and cattle Europeans introduced to the islands—date to the early 1800s. A lot of circles within circles were also carved here. They are believed to have been used to stash the umbilical cords of newborns, which tied the infant to the land and helped ensure it health and longevity. ***Beware:*** The trail leads through a thorny kiawe (aka mesquite) forest, so protect your feet.

You'll find another vast assembly of petroglyphs, surrounded by a golf course, in the **Waikoloa Petroglyph Preserve** ★ kids (Waikoloa Beach Resort, off Hwy. 19 near mile marker 76; petroglyph area is well marked, just before Kings' Shops). Among the canoes, animals, and other traditional themes, there's a carving here of a *paniolo,* a Hawaiian cowboy, on horseback. You can wander the cinder pathways through the field on your own, but you'll learn more if you take the **free tour** (☎ 808/886-8811) that's offered daily. It meets at 10:30am at the nearby Kings' Shops, in front of the food pavilion, and lasts about an hour. The tour walks along a section of the King's Trail, which once circled the island, and which cuts through the petroglyph field (petroglyphs are typically found along trails). After the tour, go to nearby **Anaehoomalu Bay** (p. 381) to see the ancient Hawaiian fishpond and to take a swim in the ocean.

At many ancient Hawaiian sites, it takes some imagination to see how the piles of stones lying about would have been used by the people who originally piled them. That's not the case at **Puuhonua o Honaunau** ★★★ (Keala O Keawe Rd., off Hwy. 11 at mile marker 104, south of Kailua-Kona; ☎ 808/328-2288; admission $5 per car), where original structures have been reconstructed or so well preserved that you'll have no trouble at all seeing how things were. In ancient times, this was a place of refuge, a *puuhonua,* where noncombatants could go in times of

Petroglyph Protocol

For years, people have taken rubbings and castings of Hawaii's more accessible petroglyphs, which seems harmless enough, but actually damages the carvings. These days, it's a look-but-don't-touch policy with petroglyphs, except for a special area in the **Puako Petroglyph Archeological District** where you can take rubbings from replicas, if you must. A better way to record what's there is with a camera. The long shadows of the late afternoon make the carvings stand out best, and offer the best viewing and photo opportunities.

war, where warriors on the losing side of a battle could find safety, and where *kapu* breakers in mortal danger might find a second chance. The kahuna at a place of refuge could absolve *kapu* breakers of their sins, freeing them to return to society without fear of retribution. Otherwise, they might face death.

Each island had *puuhonua,* and the Big Island had at least six. This one has survived, and it's a great place to get a visceral sense of what some of the human landscape of ancient Hawaii looked like. A 1,000-foot-long mortarless rock wall, 10 feet high and 17 feet deep, is in perfect shape, with lava rock arranged into long, clean, tapered lines. The wall seals off a broad point of land upon which waves crash and a *heiau* (temple) and royal mausoleum stand, complete with prayer tower and grimacing idols. Near the base for another *heiau,* there's a flat stone used as a game board for *konone,* the Hawaiian version of checkers. Small black-lava and white-coral playing pieces fill niches carved into the top of the board, and it's not hard to imagine refugees gathered around it, whiling away the time.

Outside of the wall, there's a royal village compound with fishponds, thatched structures, and a sandy canoe landing cut naturally in the rock (this is a great place to watch turtles). It takes about half an hour to do the self-guided tour with a brochure you can pick up at the visitor center where you enter. But it can get pretty hot and sunny here, so bring water and a hat. Afterward, walk over to **Two Step** (p. 379), a nearby snorkeling and scuba-diving spot where you can jump in the water to cool off.

Unlike well-preserved **Puuhonua o Honaunau** (p. 386), many of the ancient sites spread across the 1,160 acres of lava desert and shoreline of **Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park** ✪ (Hwy. 19 between mile markers 96 and 97; ☎ 808/329-6881; gate open 8am–3pm; free admission) take either an archaeologist's eye to appreciate, or at least the free map and interpretive brochure handed out at the visitor center. Also, unlike Puuhonua o Honaunau, which gets a half million visitors a year, scarcely anyone seems to come here, even though it's just 4½ miles north of Kailua town. A network of age-old trails runs through the park, but the shimmering air rising off the sun-baked lava discourages all but the most ardent (and well-hydrated) hikers, or those who come early or late in the day. It seems as if no one could have ever lived there, but hundreds of Hawaiians once did. They were concentrated along the shore, where they tended fishponds, grew some crops in raised beds (using coconut husks soaked in fresh water for irrigation), and traded what they harvested from the sea for what people living in the green upslope areas grew.

If you visit, you'll find all sorts of ancient structures, including two huge fishponds, a large fish trap (fish swam in at high tide and got stuck when the tide dropped), and a *heiau,* plus house sites, planters, and stone cairns that mark the boundary between the *ahupua'a* of Kaloko and Honokohau, the two ancient land divisions that met here. From the visitor center it's about a half-mile walk through the lava field to the fish trap and the sea. A full loop through the park takes about 2 hours. You can also get into Kaloko-Honokohau by parking on the north side of Honokohau Harbor, which is the way to go if you want to beat the heat by hiking in the late afternoon, since the official parking area at the visitor center closes at 3pm. Just be sure to stop at the visitor center in advance to pick up a map and brochure.

The Captain Cook Monument

Captain James Cook, on an expedition in search of the fabled Northwest Passage, became the first known European to reach Hawaiian waters. He spent 2½ weeks at **Kealakekua Bay** in 1779, provisioning his two ships for a journey to the Arctic. Things went well enough with the Hawaiians at first, who initially suspected he must be a god. They quickly figured out he wasn't. Cook left on good terms, but when he was forced back to the bay to make repairs to a broken mast, everything descended into chaos. The British, in trying to recover a stolen cutter, killed an *alii,* inciting a skirmish in which Cook was stoned, stabbed, clubbed, held under water, and beaten in the head with a rock.

The **Captain Cook Monument,** a 27-foot obelisk, stands near the spot where he died. A small plaque in shallow water marks the actual spot where he's believed to have fallen. The hard-to-reach point where the monument is located is part of **Kealakekua Bay State Historic Park,** which is also a marine conservation district and one of the best snorkeling spots in Hawaii. Ruins of the village of Kaawaloa lie in the thick kiawe forest behind the shore.

Another good place to get an idea of the human scale of ancient Hawaii is **Lapakahi State Historical Park** (Hwy. 270, near mile marker 14; ☎ 808/882-6207; 8am–4pm daily; free admission), on the north end of the island. Here you'll see the partially reconstructed remains of a fishing village founded some 600 years ago. It sits on a desolate, windblown stretch of coastline, and feels like a Stone Age ghost town. A 45-minute self-guided tour (you can cheat and shorten it) takes you past 23 points of interest, including house and burial sites, a canoe shed, and a fishing shrine. The self-guided tour brochure has a mystical tone that suits the place perfectly. Take, for example, this quote: "You will feel the presence—you will look for things that are but cannot be seen."

On the very northernmost tip of the island stands **Mookini Heiau** (Hwy. 270 to Upolu Rd., at mile marker 20; at the airfield, turn left onto the unpaved road and go about 1½ miles), staring across choppy Alenuihaha Channel at the dark shores of northeastern Maui. This *heiau* (temple), nearly the size of a football field and 30-feet tall in places, was dedicated to Ku, the god of war. Surprisingly, the descendants of the high priests who built the *heiau* around 480 A.D. and oversaw it through the centuries still oversee it today (p. 406).

About 1,000 yards away is the **King Kamehameha Birthplace** (½ mile further along the dirt road). The Hawaiians weren't going by the Gregorian calendar then, but the year of Kamehameha's birth has been pinpointed through chants to refer to a mysterious star appearing in the sky at the time of the future king's birth, an omen now presumed to have been Haley's comet, which appeared in 1758. As the story goes, a prophecy foretold that Kamehameha would one day rule the Big Island, even though he was not in the royal line of succession. As a precautionary

measure, a high chief from the east side sent warriors to kill the infant, but Kamehameha's mother vanished with him after his birth and raised him in hiding. You can walk to the birth site from the *heiau* and see smooth birthing stones lying within a double-walled enclosure. You can't drive to these sites without a four-wheel-drive vehicle, but the 3-mile round-trip hike along the road is easy and pleasant enough.

In the nearby town of Kapaau stands a bronze **statue of King Kamehameha** (front lawn of the Kapaau Courthouse) with a spear in one hand, and sometimes a fresh flower lei in the outstretched palm of his other. Identical statues can be found in Honolulu and Hilo. This is the original, commissioned in 1878 and lost when the ship carrying it from Paris, where it was cast, sank off the Falkland Islands. A replacement was commissioned, and arrived in Honolulu safely. A few weeks later, a ship showed up in Honolulu harbor carrying the original. The captain had found it in a Port Stanley junkyard, where it wound up after someone salvaged the wreck.

As the story goes, prophecy held that Kamehameha would conquer all of the Hawaiian Islands only after he built a temple to his family war god. The enormous structure he constructed at Kawaihae is now **Puukohola Heiau National Historic Site** ★★ (Hwy. 270, near Kawaihae Harbor; ☎ 808/882-7218; www.nps.gov/puhe; visitor center open 7:30am–4pm; free admission). This impressive place is right next to Spencer Beach Park, a convenient spot to take a dip after hiking around the parched 77-acre site. Puukohola was constructed between 1790 and 1791. For its dedication, Kamehameha invited his cousin and rival from east Hawaii, Keoua. When Keoua's canoes landed at Puukohola, he was attacked and killed, his corpse prepared as the *heiau*'s first sacrifice. It's possible that Keoua knew what he was in for. As his troops passed Kilauea volcano on their return home from an earlier battle with Kamehameha, an explosive eruption buried many of them in scalding ash. A high-level admonishment like this from the gods—in this case the fearsome volcano goddess Pele—could have demoralized Keoua so thoroughly that he simply resigned himself to his fate at Puukohola. In any case, his death ended opposition to Kamehameha on the Big Island, and fulfillment of the prophecy got off to a quick start.

Two other *heiau* occupy this site, though you'll only see one, **Mailekini Heiau,** an older temple that Kamehameha converted into a fort with cannons he acquired from Western traders. The other is **Hale O Kapuni,** built in the sea just offshore and dedicated to sharks, who breed in these waters (don't worry, they don't bother swimmers in the protected waters at the nearby beach park). This *heiau* once stood above the waves, but has since fallen beneath them.

Across Highway 270 from Puukohola Heiau, you'll find the **home site of John Young** (ask for directions at the visitor center), one of Kamehameha's two British advisors. Young and his associate, Isaac Davis, started out as ordinary seamen and ended up as chiefs in the Hawaiian Kingdom. They taught the Hawaiians how to use cannons and muskets, which gave Kamehameha a colossal advantage in battle, and they provided the king invaluable insight into the minds of the European traders, who were showing up increasingly in Hawaiian waters. Young's house very well might have been the first structure ever built with mortar in Hawaii. The foundation and remnants of the walls remain, along with those of a half-dozen other buildings. One was a traditional Hawaiian *hale,* where

Young's royal-blooded Hawaiian wife resided. She apparently didn't think mortared stone was necessarily an improvement on what Hawaiians already had.

Kamehameha spent his final years presiding over his kingdom and fishing at **Kamakahonu** (now the grounds of the King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel, 75–5660 Palani Rd.; Kailua-Kona), his royal compound on Kailua Bay, where he died in 1819. After his death, his son and heir to the throne, Liholiho, sat down to dinner here with Queen Kaahumanu and other women, breaking a fundamental *kapu* that prohibited the sexes from eating together, and symbolically shattering the *kapu* system, the age-old religious order. Nothing remains of the royal compound except the **Ahuena Heiau,** which is a reconstruction. It looks authentic enough, but it's a fraction of the original's size.

Liholiho's abandonment of the *kapu* system set off an insurrection against him, led by his cousin Kekuaokalani. In the battle that followed, Kekuaokalani and many of his warriors were killed and the uprising was quashed. At the end of Alii Drive, past the Kona Country Club, you'll find **Kuamo'o Battlefield and Lekeleke Burial Grounds** (7 miles south of Kailua town), a lava plain between a steep hillside and rugged sea cliffs, where 300 or so Hawaiians died in the battle. At first, all you'll see is a chaotic jumble of heaving, crumbling a'a' lava. Then, your eyes start to notice the stone cairns filled with the dead that cover the battlefield, their clean rock lines bringing order to the tortured landscape. Nowadays, this is a popular spot for picnics and sunsets.

Eighteen nineteen was an important year in Hawaiian history. Kamehameha died, the *kapu* system was abandoned, and while everybody was still reeling from those developments, the brigantine "Thaddeus" anchored off Kailua-Kona with a strange group of passengers onboard—Congregationalist Christian missionaries. They weren't immediately welcomed ashore, but after some negotiations they won permission to stay on a trial basis. The first church they put up was a thatched hut, which they replaced in 1837 with a more permanent building, constructed with the stones of an abandoned *heiau* and called **Mokuaikaua Church** (75–5713 Alii Dr.; ☎ 808/329-0655). Today its steeple rises above the souvenir shops and restaurants of Kailua-Kona's deepest tourist zone. It's open from dawn until dusk, and you should take a look around. Check out how the posts and beams are joined with notches and pegs. The missionaries didn't have nails, which is just as well because nails probably would have rusted away by now. Don't be put off if

A Walking Tour

The **Kona Historical Society** (call ☎ 808/938-8825; tours Mon–Fri at 9am, 11am, and 1pm; $20; reservations required) conducts a 1½-hour walking tour of historic sites around downtown Kailua-Kona. The walk starts at King Kamehameha's old royal compound, Kamakahonu, where the King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel stands today. It then heads toward Mokuaikaua Church, and finishes across the street at Hulihee Palace. The guides brim with ideas and information, and the price includes a map.

Coffee Country

The upper regions of Kona have sunny mornings, cloudy afternoons, mild nights, and rich volcanic soil—all of which coffee plants adore. Kona coffee grows between 500 and 3,000 feet elevation, and in the mile-wide, 30-mile-long Kona Coffee Belt. For 1 week in the fall, the **Kona Coffee Cultural Festival** (www.konacoffeefest.com) celebrates the island-grown bean with a tasting and coffee cherry (as the ripe red beans are called) picking competitions, a Miss Kona Coffee pageant, floral displays, lei-making contests, luncheons, running races, talent shows, craft workshops, art exhibits, and more.

Note: Ask at any concierge's desk for the free brochure that provides a self-guided driving tour of the coffee belt.

there's a service in progress (Sun at 8 and 10:30am); you can still poke around unnoticed in the vestibule, where there are some historic displays, including an enormous model of the Thaddeus.

Directly across the street from Mokuaikaua Church sits **Hulihee Palace** ★★★ (75–5718 Alii Dr.; ☎ 808/329-1877; www.huliheepalace.org; $6 adults, $1 children 18 and younger), built the year after the church was completed by High Chief Kuakini, governor of the island, and used by subsequent generations of *alii* as a seaside retreat. After the Hawaiian monarchy fell, the palace fell into disrepair. It was saved from demolition in 1920 by the Daughters of Hawaii, a women's society founded by seven missionary daughters, who restored it and have maintained it since. The society also hosts free afternoon concerts and hula performances here. Visit the website for details and schedules.

The palace is filled with some of its original furnishings, as well as artifacts such as a 22-foot spear that belonged to Kamehameha himself, and an enormous hat box made for Princess Ruth from the trunk of a coconut tree. When you stand at the front gate and face Hulihee Palace, with its neat, quiet grounds, and the glimmering sea beyond, it's easy to forget for a moment the world of mass tourism swirling behind you along Alii Drive. Kailua-Kona is once again a sleepy village built on a lava shoreline, and Hawaii an island kingdom, whose vacationing royals considered this spot especially beautiful, even though they all came from beautiful places.

Farmers in ancient Hawaii created the Kona Field System, a network of terraced agricultural lands spread across 30 square miles of rich volcanic slopes. You can see remnants of these gardens and groves at the **Amy Greenwell Ethnobotanical Garden** (Hwy. 11 at mile marker 11, Captain Cook; ☎ 808/323-3318; weekdays 8:30am–5pm; $4). All 250 of the plant species on these tranquil 15-acre grounds are either native or endemic to the islands, or were introduced by the first Polynesian settlers. The Hawaiians had uses for just about all of them, such as the tall fan-shaped loulu palm, which was used for thatch, spears, and its edible seeds. You can walk the gardens on your own, but you'll learn more on one of the guided tours, offered Wednesday and Friday at 1pm for $5. There's a free tour the second Saturday of every month at 10am.

Parker Ranch: Historic Homes & Fun on the Range

Beef came to Hawaii when the explorer Captain George Vancouver gave cattle to King Kamehameha as a gift. Kamehameha turned them loose to reproduce, issuing a *kapu* protecting them from harm. They bred like crazy, and before long Hawaii had a wild-cattle problem, with the beasts destroying forests, trampling crops, and threatening people. To bring the beasts under control, Kamehameha hired John Palmer Parker, a young American sailor who had jumped ship. Parker Ranch arose from the animals and the land near Waimea that Kamehameha granted to Parker for his efforts. It grew to become one of the largest ranches in the United States.

In Waimea, at the **Parker Ranch Museum & Visitor Center** (67–1185 Mamalahoa Hwy., behind the Parker Ranch Shopping Center; ☎ 808/885-7655; www.parkerranch.com; admission $7 adults, $5.50 children 4–12), you can get a good overview of the history of the ranch and the evolution of the *paniolo* (Hawaiian cowboy). Nearby, at the **Parker Ranch Historic Homes and Gardens** (Hwy. 190, outside Waimea; ☎ 808/885-5433; admission $9 adults, $7 children 4–12; closed Sun), you can visit the home John Parker built for himself and the high-ranking Hawaiian he married, as well as the opulent mansion where subsequent generations dwelled. Parker's house, known as **Mana Hale,** is a New England saltbox with a shiplike interior finished in rich koa wood. It was moved, board by board, from its original location and reassembled here, next door to **Puopelo,** the family estate. The last person to live in Puopelo was Richard Smart, Parker's great-great grandson, a Broadway and cabaret performer, and the end of the family bloodline. When he died in 1992, the ranch was taken over by a trust, which manages it for the benefit of several Waimea community groups. You can wander around the two homes and see Smart's collection of antiques, Peking glassware, and French Impressionist paintings, including works by Degas. Twenty-minute lectures on the Parker family are given at the top of the hour throughout the day. Be sure to pop into the powder room, which Smart turned into something of a shrine to his theater days.

To see the more traditional side of ranching, you can go on a 45-minute **wagon ride** (☎ 808/885-7655; $15 adults, $12 children 4–12; Tues–Sat 10am–2pm tours depart from the visitor center on the hour). You can also **tour the ranch by horseback or ATV** (☎ 808/885-7655; $79 by hoof, $95 on wheels). Both types of tours last 2 hours and happen at 8:15am and 12:15pm daily. Both also offer a 1½-hour sunset tour at 4:15pm.

Cultural Sights

ART IN THE WEST & THE PARKER RANCH

One of the most extensive private art collections in Hawaii belongs to one of the most exclusive private schools in the world, Hawaii Preparatory Academy in

Waimea. At the **Isaacs Art Center Museum and Gallery** (65–1268 Kawaihae Rd., Waimea; ☎ 808/885-5884; Tues–Sat 10am–5pm), you can view some of the multimillion-dollar collection. On display are works by renowned Hawaii artists such as Jean Charlot, Madge Tennent, and Herb Kane, as well as works by others such as 16th-century printmaker Albrecht Dürer. The gallery itself occupies the town's old public school building, which was built in 1915 and slated for demolition in 2002. The community rallied to save the schoolhouse from a passive-aggressive state Department of Education that was determined to raze the place. In the end, it came down to a sympathetic demolition contractor, who exercised a right-of-salvage clause in his contract to salvage the entire building, moving it in sections a few blocks through town to the private school site. State officials were chagrined when they discovered the building hadn't ended up in the landfill, but there was nothing they could do about it. The building was saved and put to good use.

SPACE, TECHNOLOGY & MARINE MATTERS

Unless you're involved in the world of space exploration, don't go out of your way to see the **Onizuka Space Center** kids (at Kona International Airport, between Aloha and Hawaiian airlines; ☎ 808/329-3441; daily 8:30am–4:30pm; $3 adults, $1 children 12 and under). But if you have a long wait at the airport, it's a pleasant enough place to kill time, especially for kids. It's filled with space and science games and toys (though much of the hands-on stuff was out-of-order when I visited). Exhibits include the Apollo 13 space suit worn by astronaut Fred Haise, and a gravity well that demonstrates orbital motion (it's a large, shallow funnel that sucks a rolling metal ball round and round, faster and faster, in elliptical loops, until the ball finally drops through the hole at the bottom).

The center is dedicated to Ellison Onizuka, a Big Island boy who grew up to be an astronaut and perished when the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded in 1986. In addition to the space and science stuff, there's the Onizukanalia, including a clear-headed essay on the evils of communism that Onizuka wrote in eighth grade. (Don't confuse the Onizuka Space Center with the Onizuka Center for International Astronomy on Mauna Kea, p. 397. They're named after the same Onizuka, but they're unrelated.)

On sun-drenched Keahole Point, the sunniest coastal area in the United States, researchers and entrepreneurs use solar energy and chilly seawater in unexpected ways at the **Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawaii** (off Hwy. 11 just south of Kona International Airport; ☎ 808/329-7341; www.nelha.org). Tenants of this 870-acre state-funded technology park have access to a constant supply of pure, 43°F (6°C) seawater, pumped up from 2,000 and 3,000 feet. They use it to raise abalone, cold-water flounder, and other sea creatures you wouldn't otherwise find in Hawaii. The nutritional supplement spirulina grows in massive rectangular ponds, which gleam in the afternoon sun and catch the eyes of airline passengers. One company desalinates the seawater, bottles it, and sells it in Japan at ridiculous prices, where it's marketed as the purest water on earth. At the end of the 2-mile road running through the park, there's a public exhibit where you can see a section of the enormous pipeline. Strawberries, tomatoes, periwinkle, parsley, and thyme grow there under the merciless Keahole Point sun, their roots cooled and watered by condensation on the plastic hoses that circulate cold seawater through their raised beds. Presentations ($5 per person) are given every Wednesday and Thursday from 10 to 11:30am at the public exhibit area.

Manta Rays: Flying Mouths of the Sea

Because manta rays are impossible to keep in captivity and difficult to study in the wild, marine scientists know little about them. One thing is clear though: Manta rays love zooplankton, those microscopic, often larval, critters of the sea. If you shine a bright light into the ocean, zooplankton will flock to it like bugs to a headlight, and the mantas in Kailua-Kona usually follow. The **Sheraton Keauhou Bay Resort & Spa** (78–128 Ehukai St.; ☎ 808/930-4900), built on a rocky promontory south of Kailua-Kona, shines a light into the water just off its Crystal Blue Lounge, drawing mantas to feed and people to watch them. The mantas, which resemble flying mouths, don't show up every night, but they do at least half the time, usually after 8pm. (***Tip:*** Try to go at low tide. If it's high tide, you probably won't see them.) On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 6pm, there's a free manta ray briefing at the Crystal Blue Lounge, where manta experts discuss mantas and their behavior, or what's known of it all anyway. Pull up to the front of the hotel and turn your car over to the valet.

EAST HAWAII

Again we'll focus primarily on history and culture, but this time we'll discuss the attractions found in the eastern part of the Big Island.

Three weeks after they married in 1832, two idealistic young New Englanders, David and Sarah Lyman, set sail for Hawaii to work as Christian missionaries. At the home they built near Hilo Bay, they taught young Hawaiians to read, write, and do arithmetic. They entertained Hawaiian royalty and hosted visiting Westerners, including the illustrious Mark Twain and Robert Louis Stevenson. The **Lyman Mission House** (276 Haili St., Hilo; ☎ 808/935-5021; www.lymanmuseum.org; Mon–Sat 9:30am–4:30pm; admission $10 adults, $3 children 7–17) has become the oldest wood-framed building in Hawaii. It's open for 20-minute guided tours Monday through Saturday at 10am, 11am, 1pm, 2pm, and 3pm.

Right next door stands the **Lyman Museum,** which has cultural, geologic, and astronomy exhibits. Admission to the mission house gets you into the museum as well. The house is filled with furniture, clothing, and artifacts from the Lymans' days, and it retains the spirit of its original occupants, who lived here until their work on Earth was done. He died in 1884, and she in 1885.

Natural Science Wonders

The mostly uninhabited islets and atolls of the northwestern Hawaiian Islands, which extend 1,000 miles beyond Kauai, make up two-thirds of the Hawaiian archipelago. They also contain 70% of all the coral reefs in U.S. waters, which, like sensitive coral reefs everywhere, have suffered from environmental degradation. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's coral reef museum, **Mokupapapa Discovery Center for Hawaii's Remote Coral Reefs** ★ kids (308 Kamehameha Ave., downtown Hilo; ☎ 808/933-8195; http://hawaiireef.noaa.gov/center/welcome.html), is dedicated to these far-flung Hawaiian ecosystems.

The center's goal is to inspire kids to care about coral reefs and the life they support, and advocate for them when they're grown. But the place is hardly just for kids. One push-button exhibit demonstrates the lifecycle of Hawaiian islands, showing how they go from enormous, fiery places like the Big Island—too young to have much coral—to tiny remnants like Kure Atoll, at the westernmost end of the island chain, where the original island has long since vanished and the fringing coral reef is all that remains. I find the robotic arms, like the ones scientists in submersibles use to grab stuff on the ocean floor, impossible to resist.

If there's only one thing you take away from a visit to the **Pacific Tsunami Museum** (130 Kamehameha Ave., downtown Hilo; ☎ 808/935-0926; www.tsunami.org; Mon–Sat 9am–4pm; $7), hopefully it will be this: If the ocean suddenly and freakishly recedes, as it sometimes does when a tsunami approaches, don't wander out onto the exposed seafloor to investigate. Run for your life. Densely populated and located along a bay that amplifies tsunamis, Hilo was hit hard by two big 20th-century tsunamis, one in 1946 and one in 1960, as well as

World's Biggest Hula Happening

The missionaries did their best to stop hula, but they only succeeded in driving it underground. By the time Hawaii's last king, David Kalakaua, took the throne, the missionaries were gone but the hula remained. King Kalakaua liked the hula. He had dancers perform at his coronation in 1883, the first public hula in ages. His love of the dance, along with his general flair for fun, earned him his nickname, the Merrie Monarch.

Nowadays, for 1 week each spring, hula troops from all over Hawaii, the mainland, and Japan, converge in normally sleepy Hilo for a gargantuan hula gathering named in Kalakaua's honor, **The Merrie Monarch Festival** (☎ 808/935-9168; http://merriemonarchfestival.org; $25 reserved seating, $15 general admission). The festival kicks off on Easter Sunday and continues through Wednesday with a series of free events. On Thursday, things get serious, with paid seating and smiling but fiercely competitive female dancers vying for the title of Miss Aloha Hula. Male and female *halau*, as hula troops are known, compete in the traditional dance category, and on Friday they compete in the modern Hawaiian dance, with the awards ceremony afterward. Tickets for the 3 days of competition go on sale after Christmas and are available by mail only. If you want to go, send a cashier's check or money order, not postmarked before December 26, to: **The Merrie Monarch Festival,** c/o Hawaii Naniloa Hotel, 93 Banyan Dr., Hilo, HI 96720. Only two tickets per person are allowed. Merrie Monarch is a time of tremendous Hawaiian pride and a great week to be in Hilo. But it's a terrible time to try to find a hotel room or a rental car. If you can't get a ticket, or you like your hula in smaller doses, you can watch the festival on television. It's broadcast live throughout the islands. ***Tip:*** Don't count on finding a room in Hilo the week after Easter.

some smaller ones. This unusual little museum serves as a memorial to the people killed, while doing what it can to educate the living about tsunamis so fewer people will be killed in the next ones. Despite the grave mission, the museum's filled with good, clean, scientific fun. At one exhibit, you get to play the director of the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, who has to decide whether or not to evacuate Hawaii's coastlines as a potentially devastating tsunami approaches. If you make the right call, you save lots of lives; if you blow it, either people die or you cost the state $50 million for a false alarm. Unlike the real director, you get to pick the location and magnitude of the earthquake that generates the waves—and you can shrug it off if you make a bad call.

The **Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawaii** (600 Imiloa Pl., Hilo; ☎ 808/969-9700; www.imiloahawaii.org) opened in February 2006, and its unusual buildings have already became an instant landmark—three giant, titanium covered cones, sitting on the hillside above the University of Hawaii at Hilo, that represent the island's most prominent volcanoes: Mauna Loa, Mauna Kea, and Hualalai. The center houses a combination of scientific and cultural Hawaiian exhibits.

The World of Water—and a Zoo

The Wailuku River flows through Hilo and gives it an unusual feature for a city: an 80-foot waterfall. **Rainbow Falls** (west, meaning uphill, on Wainuenue Ave., watch for sign) plunges into a large round pool with an enormous cavern behind its impact zone. According to legend, this cavern is where Hina, mother of the mischievous demigod Maui, lived. Swimming is off-limits at Rainbow Falls, but it's okay at **Boiling Pots** (half a mile up Wainuenue from Rainbow Falls), if the river isn't running too high. A series of plunge pools make up Boiling Pots. When the river runs high, water cascades from one to the next. In times of drought, water drains through fissures from one to another, whirlpooling and roiling as it goes, and looking something like boiling pots. You can swim here when the river's running low, but not otherwise.

A few miles south of Hilo, on the road to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, you'll pass a turnoff for the **Panaewa Rainforest Zoo** ★★★ kids (Makami St., off Hwy. 11; ☎ 808/959-9233; www.hilozoo.com; daily 9am–4pm; free admission), a lush 12 acres of plants and animals, with free loaner umbrellas at the entrance so you can stroll about in any weather. More than 80 animals live here, including monkeys, butterflies, giant anteaters, sloth, lemurs, toucans, water buffalo, a pygmy hippopotamus, and a rare white Bengal tiger. The zoo grounds are actually a botanical garden, planted with palms, orchids, bamboos, tropical rhododendrons, and strange things like the enormous Indonesian corpse flower, which attracts its insect pollinators with a smell like rotting flesh. As if this wasn't already a great place for kids, there's also a petting zoo on Saturday from 1:30 to 2:30pm. ***Tiger feeding time:*** 3:30pm daily.

Natural Wonders

MAUNA KEA: THE TALLEST PEAK

Towering 13,796 feet above the Pacific, the **summit of Mauna Kea** ★★★ (from Hwy. 200, Saddle Rd., turn onto John A. Burns Way and start climbing; drive time to the summit from Kailua-Kona is about 2½ hr., and from Hilo about 1½ hr.) is

For an Inside Look at the Big Island: Lava Tubes

The Big Island is laced with lava tubes, underground conduits, through which molten lava once traveled and still does around Kilauea. Here are three good, deactivated ones you can travel through:

Kaumana Cave (Kaumana Drive, 5 miles from downtown Hilo; free) is an enormous, rugged tube that daring explorers with flashlights can walk or crawl 3,000 feet into. It's usually dripping wet inside, with stalactites, lava drips, and roots growing through the ceiling that form habitats for spiders and insects. This is where I discovered why spelunkers wear helmets and not baseball caps. I almost knocked myself unconscious here walking into the ceiling, which snuck down to head level, unbeknownst to my eyes concealed behind the bill of my cap.

Thurston Lava Tube (at Volcanoes National Park; $10 per car entrance fee; p. 401) is the tamest and easiest lava tube to explore, with its graded path and lighting. It's big enough for a subway train, and open at either end. An additional unlit section continues for several hundred more feet, which you can explore with a flashlight.

Kula Kai Caverns and Lava Tubes (near South Point; % 808/929-7539 or 808/929-9375; www.kulakaicaverns.com; by appointment only) is a 1,000-year-old underground labyrinth on private land, with guided tours that take you as far as 2 miles into the earth. The easy ½-hour tour costs $15 for adults and $8 for children; a 2-hour journey costs $65 per person; and the 3-hour deep tour costs $95 per person.

the highest mountain peak in the Pacific Ocean. The dry, stable, clean air at that altitude makes it one of the best sites for astronomical observation in the world, and various nations have built the 13 astronomical observatories here. The ancient Hawaiians considered the summit to be the realm of the gods. The presence of the telescopes and proposals to develop new ones cause perennial friction between Hawaiian activists and the astronomical community. On clear days you can see some of the telescopes from sea level, where you get no sense whatsoever that their tiny, shining domes are actually hundreds of feet tall, or that they're such a source of contention.

The summit is open to the public, but only four-wheel-drive vehicles are permitted to the top, and only one company on the island allows its 4×4s up here: **Harper Car & Truck Rentals of Hawaii** (locations in Hilo and Kona; ☎ 800/852-9993 or 808/969-1478; www.harpershawaii.com). Without a 4×4, you can drive as far as 9,200 feet, still well above the clouds, and visit the **Onizuka Center for International Astronomy Visitor Information Station** ★★★ (☎ 808/961-2180; www.ifa.hawaii.edu/info/vis; 9am–10pm). Whether or not you're

going all the way up, you should stop here. This is an ideal place to acclimate to the altitude if you're planning on driving up to the summit. During the day, a solar telescope is trained on the sun, and you can see solar flares and sometimes sunspots through it. More public telescopes are put out at night, and a couple of eager and knowledgeable interpretive guides are usually around day and night to chat. **Free summit tours** are conducted on Saturday and Sunday, leaving from the visitor information station at 1pm, and visiting two telescopes on the summit. The catch is that you have to get yourself to the top, and again, that requires a 4×4. The tour has other restrictions as well: no one under 16, pregnant, with heart or respiratory conditions, or who has been scuba diving in the previous 24 hours gets to go (divers risk the bends). ***Tip:*** Take a short walk through the enclosed area behind the visitor center. You'll find silversword growing there, a rare plant found nowhere in the world but Mauna Kea, Mauna Loa, and Haleakala. They're fenced here to protect them from feral goats and sheep, who have nibbled them nearly to extinction.

If you make it to the top on your own, head for the visitors gallery at the **W.M. Keck Observatory** (☎ 808/885-7887; www.keckobservatory.com; 10am–4pm Mon–Fri), which has twin telescopes peering into the deepest space like close-set eyeballs (you'll know it when you see it). At the visitors gallery, you can peer into one of the telescope's domes to see what's going on inside, and watch a video. If you arranged it beforehand, you can also tour the **Subaru Telescope** (www.naoj.org), Japan's national astronomical observatory and Mauna Kea's newest telescope. You can see this $400-million marvel of Japanese construction, engineering, and miniaturization on free guided tours, 15 days a month at 10:30am, 11:30am, and 1:30pm. Reservations are required, and they can only be made online. And again, transportation to the summit is up to you.

THE HILO-HAMAKUA COAST

The lush, green drive along the 50-mile Hilo-Hamakua Coast, on the island's northeast side, is sort of like Maui's long, winding drive to Hana (p. 294), except the road is straighter, faster, and not jammed with caravans of rental cars. This was once the most productive sugar region in Hawaii, a rolling patchwork of rainforest and green tasseled cane fields that stretched for 50 miles from Hilo in the south to Waipio Valley in the north. The rainy Hilo-Hamakua Coast runs between the cinder red upper slopes of Mauna Kea and jungle-fringed sea cliffs. Dozens of deep gorges cut through the landscape, concealing spectacular waterfalls. As the last sugar mills shut down in the 1990s, small farmers began moving

Dress for the Cold

While it's 80°F (27°C) at the beach, it might be 50°F (10°C) at the summit, and even colder after dark. Temperatures can drop below freezing up here, and occasionally it snows. Bring warm clothing no matter what time of year you visit. And brace yourself for the wind. For the summit's weather and road report, call ☎ 808/935-6268.

Altitude Problems

The summit of Mauna Kea, jutting above 40% of the earth's atmosphere, is not safe for everyone to visit. The office that manages the telescope complex strongly discourages people with heart and breathing problems, pregnant women, and children under 16 from going beyond the visitor center at 9,200 feet. Also, scuba divers risk the bends if they fail to wait 24 hours after diving before climbing to the summit. Everyone else headed to the top should linger at the visitor center for 20 minutes to an hour to get acclimated to the thin air before continuing. After all, nothing ruins a good trip to the top of the world quite the like the nausea and headache that come with altitude sickness.

If you can't get to the summit on your own, you can take a commercial tour, which will carry you to the top in time for the sunset, then linger for star gazing. The best deal on tours is offered by **Arnott's Lodge and Hiking Adventures** ✰ (☎ 808/969-7097; www.arnottslodge.com; tours Mon, Wed, and Fri, departing Hilo between 2 and 3pm, depending on time of sunset), which hauls passengers up in four-wheel-drive vans out of Hilo. Guests of Arnott's Lodge pay $60 including tax, and nonguests pay $90. Bring warm clothing and food; at about 8 hours, it's a long tour and it gets cold. Other companies offer summit tours as well, and some feed you dinner, but they all charge more than $150.

in, planting things like sweet potato, macadamia nuts, bananas, coffee, vanilla, gourmet mushrooms, and oolong tea, much of which turns up at the **Hilo Farmers Market** (p. 419). The most prominent crop you'll see is the eucalyptus tree—there are 14,000 acres of them—which will likely be cut for pulp someday.

The population along the coast is concentrated in small towns and old plantation camps. The largest, with about 2,500 residents, is Honokaa in the north, sitting 1,114 feet above sea level with an elevated view across rough Alenuihaha Channel to Maui, on clear days anyway. Honokaa withered when its sugar mill closed, but it has sprung back with restaurants, shops, galleries, bed-and-breakfasts, and a restored movie house.

If you have time to explore: Look for turnoffs along the way for Old Mamalahoa Highway, the original coastal route; segments of it still remain, and you'll find streams, waterfalls, parks, and old towns along it that you won't see from Highway 19.

The paved road along the Hilo-Hamakua Coast ends about 15 minutes north of Honokaa, at the **Waipio Valley Overlook,** poised almost 2,000 feet above the mile-wide mouth of **Waipio Valley.** The view may look familiar. It's one of the iconic Hawaii vistas that perennially appears in postcards. This rainforest valley has a wild gray-sand beach, good for strolling, but not so safe for swimming. While the valley's a mile wide, it's got a network of canyons nearly 6 miles deep, and it's large enough to support a scraggly population of semiwild horses. From within the valley, you can see Hiilawe Falls and Hakalaoa Falls, the Twin Falls of Hiilawe celebrated in Hawaiian song and cascading 1,000 feet.

In ancient times, Waipio Valley was a major population center and home to many Hawaiian rulers. It's known as the Valley of Kings. Today just a handful of people live there, mostly Hawaiians, who tend ancient taro fields they've restored. They can seem a little grumpy, which you can understand with all the tourists tromping through what would otherwise be an idyllic land. If you go without a tour, be sure to respect the KEEP OUT signs. And beware of dogs, whether signs are posted or not.

Heading south along the Hilo-Hamakua Coast toward the city of Hilo, you'll come to **Laupahoehoe Beach Park** (off Hwy. 19, near mile marker 27) near the little town of Laupahoehoe, which sits high above the park on the cliff. The beach park is a peaceful windblown spot on a broad fan of lava protruding from the mouth of a valley. It's a beautiful place to breathe sea air and contemplate ironwood trees after driving for a while. The cliff-lined Hamakua Coast's only boat ramp is here, but the seas are often too rough to launch boats, and swimming is out of the question. You'll encounter a sad little monument to the 24 people killed in the 1946 April Fools' Day tsunami that slammed into the valley. Most of the victims were children, who perished when their schoolhouse was knocked off its foundation and washed away.

Another good stop is **Umauma World Botanical Gardens** (Hwy. 19 near mile marker 16; ☎ 808/963-5427; www.worldbotanicalgardens.com; Mon–Sat 9am–5:30pm; $9.50 adults, $2.50 children ages 5–12, $5 children ages 13–17). The 300 acres of former sugar-cane land here has been transformed into Hawaii's largest botanical gardens. It's wheelchair accessible, and it's a great place for kids.

Return of the Kings?

Waipio Valley is rich in history and legend, and possibly involved in a museum heist. In 1994, a pair of coconut-fiber baskets containing the bones of two Hawaiian kings disappeared from the Bishop Museum on Oahu. They've never been recovered. It's widely believed that the two kings have been reinterred somewhere in Waipio Valley, from which many Hawaiians say they were stolen to begin with.

You need a four-wheel-drive vehicle to get down the horrendously steep road into the valley, and to get around once you're there, but all of the car-rental companies on the island (except Harpers) put the valley off-limits for their four-wheel-drive vehicles. A better way to go anyway is with **Waipio Valley Shuttle & Tours** (☎ 808/775-7121; Mon–Sat 9am–4pm; $45 adults, $20 children), which leaves from the overlook on 90-minute tours. A more unusual way to see the valley is by horse-drawn wagon, the way **Waipio Valley Wagon Tour** (☎ 808/775-9518; Mon–Sat 9:30am, 11:30am, 1:30pm, and 3:30pm; $45 adults, $23 children) does it. Tours are 90 minutes, 30 of which are spent in a 4×4 van getting down to the valley stables and back. Two companies offer 2½-hour horseback-riding tours through the valley, both charging $85: **Waipio on Horseback** (☎ 877/775-7291 or 808/775-7291; 9:30am and 1:30pm) and **Waipio Naalapa Trail Rides** (☎ 808/775-0419; 9am and 12:30pm).

A Scenic Detour

The Hilo-Hamakua Coast's thick tropical greenery gets even thicker just south of Honomu, or 8 miles north of Hilo, on this 4-mile scenic drive (between mile markers 7 and 11). The drive follows a segment of Old Mamalahoa Highway—a slow, winding route that people took along the coast before modern Highway 19 was built. This worthwhile detour runs through dark green tunnels of enveloping jungle and over single-lane bridges crossing streams and cascades that you can stop to explore.

There's a big hedge maze, but it's kept trimmed to about 5 feet, so parents can locate hopelessly lost children. Check out the Hawaiian wellness garden, the ethnobotanical garden, the arboretum, and especially the phylogenetic garden, where species are grouped in roughly the order in which they appeared on earth. A quarter-mile walk leads to an overlook facing the 300-foot triple-tiered **Umauma Falls.**

The best waterfall to seek out along the Hilo-Hamakua Coast is at **Akaka Falls State Park** ★★★ (turn left at Honomu and drive 3½ miles inland on Akaka Falls Road; free). An easy half-mile paved loop leads to and from the 440-foot falls, through rainforest. Do it counterclockwise and you'll come to 100-foot **Kahuna Falls** first, a nice warm-up waterfall. Depending how much rain there's been, the falls may roar with awesome force or cascade gracefully. Either way, you've got a good chance of catching a rainbow. The little town of **Honomu** that you pass through to get to the falls has a few shops and food vendors.

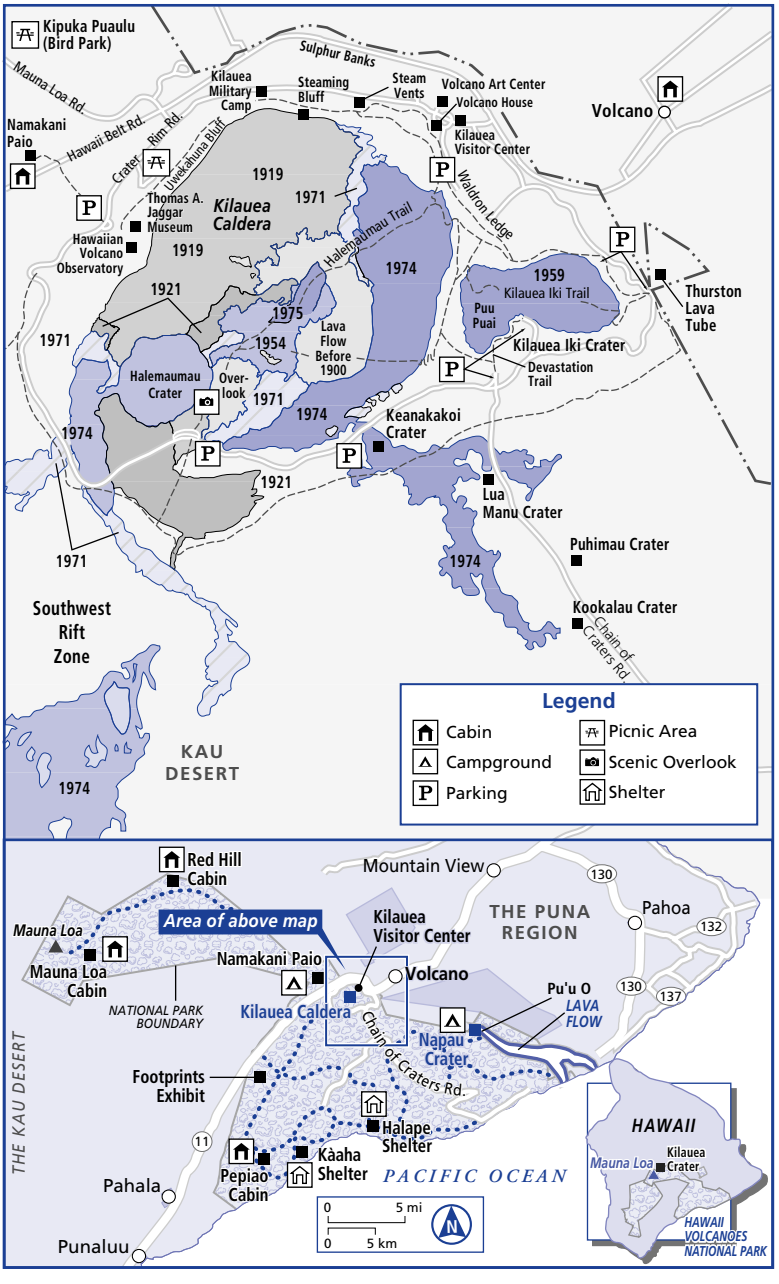
HAWAII VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park ($10 per vehicle park entrance fee; ☎ 808/985-6000; www.nps.gov/havo; open 24 hr.) has a wildly popular visitor attraction that seems impossible at first: an active, drive-up volcano. It's the smooth, fluid nature of Hawaiian magma (what lava's called before it surfaces) that makes this phenomenon possible. Hawaiian magma releases gasses easily, rather than trapping them like the sticky magma found in other, less tourist-friendly volcanoes. Gas-trapping magma leads to explosive eruptions, such as the big 1981 Mount St. Helens blast, while Hawaiian magma tends to promote long, smooth-flowing eruptions that allow this national park to have two of the world's most active volcanoes—**Mauna Loa** and **Kilauea**—*and* 2.5 million visitors a year.

From Hilo it's a 45-minute drive southwest on Highway 11 to the park. From Kailua-Kona, it's a 2½-hour drive southeast on Highway 11, or a 3-hour drive north, through Waimea and down the Hilo-Hamakua Coast, via Highways 19 and 11. Bring something to wear in case it rains—it's often wet at the 4,000-foot summit of the volcano, and, believe it or not, cold.

At press time, Mauna Loa hadn't erupted since 1984, and then the enormous lava flow that spilled down its northeast flank, coming within 4 miles of Hilo, did so outside of the park's boundaries. Kilauea, a much smaller volcano embedded in Mauna Loa's side and sitting largely within the park, began erupting in 1983. Lava has been pouring out of it almost continuously since. Conditions change all the time. Often, it's possible to walk right to spots where lava has broken out,

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park



Eruption Activity Updates

To find out whether or not flowing lava is accessible on a given day, call or go online for an **eruption activity update** (☎ 808/985-6000; http://hvo.wr.usgs.gov/kilauea/update). As you near the park, listen to 530 AM on your car radio for the latest park info.

inching up as close to it as you dare. Other times, the lava's in areas inaccessible to the public.

Give yourself at least a day at the 333,000-acre volcanoes park; with its more than 150 miles of hiking trails and backcountry campgrounds, you could spend weeks exploring. If you have only a few hours to devote to the park, do a counterclockwise loop along 11-mile **Crater Rim Drive.** If you have more time, do Crater Rim Drive and the 40-mile round-trip **Chain of Craters Road,** which dead-ends where the current flow has buried the asphalt and is sending a stream of lava into the sea (often releasing huge plumes of steam).

A Kilauea Driving Tour

Start: The Entrance Station (Hwy. 11 near the 28-mile marker).

Finish: The Entrance Station (Hwy. 11 near the 28-mile marker).

Best Time: If you're just doing Crater Rim Drive, early morning is best for beating the crowds. If you're headed for the lava flow at the end of Chain of Craters Road, hike out onto the flow field just before sunset. Lava viewing is far more dramatic after dark.

Note: Bring water and snacks with you on this tour. Hawaii Volcanoes National Park (open 24 hours) is vast, and the Volcano House Hotel and Kilauea Military Camp, both near the park entrance, are the only places in the park where you'll find provisions. After that, you're on your own.

1 The Entrance Station

Upon arrival, pay the $10 per-car fee, which is good for unlimited reentry here or entry to **Puuhonua o Honaunau** (p. 386) for 7 days. The park ranger will give you a quick eruption update if you ask, as well as a fact-laden fold-out brochure with detailed maps of the park, whether you ask or not.

Head straight to:

2 Kilauea Visitor Center

Stop here, just inside the park entrance along Crater Rim Drive, to get your bearings and get up to speed on solfatara fields, pit craters, calderas, cinder cones, spatter cones, fumaroles, and the other volcanic features you'll soon encounter. There's a bulletin board with notices on special events, lectures,

and ranger-led hikes. You can also get camping permits and find out about hiking in the park. At the gift shop (open 7:45am–5pm), you can pick up an activity book for kids and they can work through it as you drive around the park.

Across the street from the visitor center is:

3 Volcano House Hotel

The Volcano House has accommodations, a restaurant, a bar, and your first opportunity to see Kilauea Crater, an immense charred pit 3 miles long and 2 miles wide, where the volcano's activity was centered through most of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Next door to the visitor center is:

4 Volcano Art Center ★★

This a good place to find original gifts and souvenirs. See p. 421.

Continue counterclockwise around:

5 Crater Rim Drive ★★★

Kilauea's eruptive center used to be concentrated in Kilauea Caldera, one of the park's main features. Crater Rim Drive begins at the park entrance and runs around and across part of the 450-foot-deep caldera. The drive cuts through rainforest and across the crater floor and its lava desert, passing all sorts of volcanic wonders along the way.

At the end of a cul-de-sac, just after Volcano Art Center, you'll find:

6 The Sulfur Banks

Sulfuric gas fills the air with the stink of rotting eggs here, at the most accessible solfatara field in the park.

A short hop further along Crater Rim Drive brings you to:

7 The Steam Vents

Rainwater seeps into Kilauea's nether reaches, vaporizes, and returns to the atmosphere through fissures and holes here on the crater rim.

Keep driving and you'll come to:

8 Jaggar Museum

Perched on the edge of the caldera, the Jaggar Museum (8:30am–5pm) shares a building with the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, where scientists monitor the vital signs of Mauna Loa and Kilauea with instruments such as seismographs, tiltmeters, and their naked eyes. The observatory isn't open to the public, but there's a window in the museum through which you can view seismographs as they record the constant swarms of earthquakes, usually too far beneath the earth's surface to feel, on great rolling drums of paper.

Drive further and you'll reach:

9 Halemaumau Overlook

Halemaumau is a crater within the crater. Early in the 20th century, it was known worldwide as the Hawaiian Fire Pit, a roiling, sputtering lake of lava, whose levels rose and fell over the years, sometimes overflowing its banks entirely. In 1924, it suddenly drained. Its walls crumbled and collapsed, then rainwater entered cracks and set off a series of enormous steam explosions that lasted a week and a half. In the end, the crater doubled in width to 3,000 feet. The bottom is now crusted over, and it's 400 feet deep. Halemaumau is known as home of Pele, the volcano goddess. At the lookout, you may see ti-leaf-wrapped offerings left by Hawaiians. Leave them alone, and leave the offering of offerings to the Hawaiians. There's a particular protocol involved in honoring Pele, and it's not the kind of thing you want to do wrong.

Continue onward (past the turnoff for Chain of Craters Rd.), and you'll come to:

⑩ Thurston Lava Tube

A paved trail leads through an ohia forest and a fern grove, passing through a well-lit lava tube wide enough for a subway car to pass through (p. 397).

A short distance further brings you to:

⑪ Kilauea Iki Overlook

This crater was once a boiling pool of lava, from which 1,900-foot fountains of lava arose in a 1959 eruption. Now there's a nice 2-hour hike here (p. 406).

If you're headed for the lava flow, take:

⑫ Chain of Craters Road ★★★

To get to where the latest volcanic activity is occurring, take Chain of Craters Road, which descends 3,700 feet from rainforest to coastal desert, stopping where the latest lava flow crossed the road. The road is about 20 miles long, but it can get shorter because lava-viewing conditions change all the time. Some days a half-hour hike from the end of Chain of Craters Road gets you there. Some days, it's a 3-hour round-trip hike. Some days, the outbreaks aren't accessible at all.

The hike crosses jagged, crumbling, sweltering terrain, some of which may have formed just a few days earlier and not fully cooled. Not everyone can or should be out there. Falling there is like falling on glass, and people come away with ugly wounds all the time. It's already hot in this desert wasteland, and then you get close to the molten lava and it's like standing in a sauna. Instead of a sauna's healthy steam, though, sulfuric acid and sulfur dioxide hang heavily in the air, making your eyes water and your lungs burn.

Two tips: If you're headed for the flow, bring sensible shoes and lots of water. If you're going to be out there after dark—when every magma-filled crack and fissure strikingly reveals itself in incandescent orange—bring a flashlight. Hiking out before sunset and back after dark is a good strategy and a popular thing to do.

Another Way to See Kilauea

Several companies offer **helicopters tours** over the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, providing bird's-eye views of Kilauea and points in the park you can't readily get to afoot, like Puu Oo vent. In general, the smaller the helicopter, the lower the price. Most leave out of Hilo.

Tropical Helicopters (Hilo International Airport; ☎ 808/961-6810) has the best deal: $132 per person for a 35-minute tour of the volcano, tax included. For a 45-minute tour that takes in the volcano and a waterfall, the cost is $157.

Volcanic Air Pollution

Volcanic gasses in the park can make breathing difficult, especially near Halemaumau and on the lower end of Chain of Craters Road. People with respiratory conditions or heart problems, as well as pregnant women and infants, should be especially cautious.

Hikes & Walks in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park

More than 150 miles of trails run through the park, offering long hikes that can last for days or short hikes that you can accomplish in a few hours or less. Among the best day hikes are:

Halemaumau Trail (off Crater Rim Dr.), which runs 6½ miles back and forth across the floor of Kilauea Crater between the Volcano House and the Halemaumau parking lot. Cairns mark the way through the bizarre volcanic landscape.

Kilauea Iki (off Crater Rim Dr.), a 4-mile loop that runs across the crater floor, up the side, and back through rainforest along the crater rim. Kilauea Iki, or "Little Kilauea," was the center of a 1959 eruption that shot a fountain of lava 1,900 feet into the air.

Devastation Trail (off Crater Rim Dr.), a mile-long trail through skeletal remains of a rainforest scorched when ash and pumice rained down upon it during the 1959 eruption of Kilauea Iki. The trail winds among skeleton-like trees bleached as white as bone.

Puu Loa Petroglyph Field (Chain of Craters Rd., near the 15-mile marker), a 1-mile hike to an extensive petroglyph field. A boardwalk runs around the field.

THE OTHER BIG ISLAND

The range of nontraditional Big Island experiences is wide. It varies from drinking *awa* with hippies and Hawaiians deep in the heart of rural Puna, to handing out Gatorade to sweaty triathletes running in the center of touristy Kailua-Kona.

IN WEST HAWAII

You can work side by side with local people in North Kohala who care for one of the most important Native Hawaiian religious sites, **Mookini Heiau,** which is nearly the size of a football field. On the third Saturday of the month (except Nov–Jan), people from around the island turn up here for a **"Weed Pulling/Oral History Day,"** (☎ 808/373-8000; call in advance), hosted by Leimomi Mookini Lum, whose family has overseen the *heiau* (temple) for 1,500 years. The work begins at 9am. At about 11:30am, Lum calls everyone together to talk about the *heiau,* which was dedicated to Ku, the god of war. Don't expect to hear everything, though. Much of the knowledge about this place that's passed down through the ages is sacred and secret and not part of the deal.

Once or twice a month, Big Islanders passionate about conservation volunteer with **The Nature Conservancy** and set out for a day of reforestation, invasive-species eradication, or maybe trail clearing. If you join them—and they'll be happy to see you—you might plant koa and ohia seedlings in the Nature Conservancy's Kona Hema Preserve, 8,061 acres up the slope of Mauna Loa in South Kona, a

beautiful part of the island you wouldn't otherwise get to see. The preserve serves as habitat for the endangered Hawaiian hawk, the endangered Hawaiian hoary bat, the Hawaiian crow, and other rare species. For more information, contact volunteer coordinator **Dore Centeio** (☎ 808/885-1786; dcenteio@tnc.org).

Maybe you're not one of the superfit elite who can wake up in the morning and swim 2½ miles in the ocean, bike 112 miles, and then run a marathon, as do the hundreds of triathletes who come to Kona each October for the **Ironman Triathlon World Championship** (75–5722 Kuakini Hwy.; ☎ 808/329-0063; www.ironmanlive.com). But as a race volunteer, you can tap directly into the endorphin-soused, behind-the-scenes fun of it all—and maybe even end up at an after party. A staggering 7,000 volunteers are needed for everything from sticking IVs into the arms of folks who the course crushes (if you're a medical professional) to passing out T-shirts to the finishers (no particular skill required). You have to be 16 or older, and you can sign up online or just walk into the race office in the lobby of **King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel** (75-5660 Palani Rd.) during race week and say, "Hi, what can I do?"

Every Saturday morning in a lovely park beside the sea, Big Island yoga people gather to do **yoga at the beach** (Pahoehoe Beach Park, on Alii Dr. near mile marker 4; 8–9:30am; $10). It's organized through **Shambhava School of Yoga** (77–447 Seaview Circle, Kailua-Kona; ☎ 808/331-1147; www.shoshoni.org), which is part of an ashram for followers of the guru Rishi Mahamandalashwar Sri Shambhavananda. Yoga classes are held throughout the week on a beautiful covered deck with an upper-slope ocean view (class times vary, so check the website or call for the latest schedules). On Thursdays at 7pm, enthusiasts of Kirtan, the esoteric but increasingly popular practice of ecstatic Sanskrit chant, meet here for an hour to rhythmically repeat the various names of God, over and over, starting out slowly and working up into an emotional crescendo.

EAST HAWAII

With 13 of the world's most powerful telescopes clustered in the thin air atop Mauna Kea, the Big Island has a thriving community of resident and transient space scientists. Once or twice a month, a world-renowned astronomer, astrophysicist, or the like participates in the **AstroTalk lecture series** (various lecture halls at the University of Hawaii at Hilo; ☎ 808/932-2328; www.astroday.net), a joint effort of the University of Hawaii at Hilo's Department of Physics and Astronomy and the UH Institute of Astronomy. The lectures are fascinating, free, and tailored for a lay audience. Past topics have included "Dark Energy and the Runaway Universe," "New Moons of Giant Planets," and "Fragment X: Untold Tales of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9."

Cheap Yoga, Free Meditation

There's a free meditation class held every Thursday at 7pm at Hilo's most professional yoga studio: **Yoga Centered** (37 Waianuenue Ave., Hilo; ☎ 808/934-7233; www.yogacentered.com). Most drop-in yoga classes cost $12. The noon classes on Monday and Wednesday are the best deal at just $4.

At **After Dark in the Park** (Kilauea Visitor Center Auditorium, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park; ☎ 808/985-6011; www.nps.gov/havo/afterdark/adip.htm; $1 donation, plus $10 per vehicle weekly park entrance fee), guest speakers focus on topics relating to geology, biology, Hawaiian culture, and history. Programs are usually held on the second or third Tuesday of the month, beginning at 7pm, but check the website for the schedule. After Dark in the Park is usually held indoors, but it occasionally moves outdoors for something like a nighttime tour of the volcano's steaming sulfur banks, or a full-moon hike through a giant pit crater. Park officials generally discourage night hiking. People have, presumably, fallen into cracks at night, never to be seen again. If you're with After Dark in the Park, though, it's pretty safe.

Uncle's Awa Club ✯ (dead end of Hwy. 137, where lava closed the road; 5pm-whenever; closed Sunday) in Kalapana, or at what's left of Kalapana after a 1990 lava flow buried the place, draws a laid-back and motley crowd of regulars from the wilds of rural Puna to partake in the mildly narcotic, but perfectly legal, pleasures of the *awa* root (*awa*—pronounced with a "v"—is Hawaiian for kava). It's located in the front yard of Uncle Robert Keliihoomalu, Sr., a towering native Hawaiian whose enormous knarled hands can strum a ukulele as delicately as a child prodigy's. During the day, tourists on their way to the nearby black-sand beach of Kaimu—also destroyed, but making a tremendous comeback—tromp through Uncle Robert's yard to see a small interpretive exhibit on the lava flow that wiped out most of Kalapana. As lava poured over a rock wall into Uncle Robert's yard, his wife stood in its path, crying and praying for the family's home. The flow then changed direction and headed for the sea, sparing the house and its inhabitants.

When the sun goes down and the rent-a-cars disappear, devotees of the bitter but soothing beverage brewed from the *awa* root gather around Uncle Robert's open-air bar to numb their tongues, mellow their minds, and converse in soothing tones. You pay $5 per coconut shell cup or $10 to drink until closing, which on a good night might not be until 4am. The best nights to go are Friday and Saturday, when Hawaiian musicians tend to turn up and Hawaiian food is served.

Uncle Robert's extended-family gatherings frequently overlap the Awa Club operation, offering discerning visitors a glimpse into contemporary Hawaiian culture that's as warm with aloha as it gets. But the scene is not geared toward tourists, and it's definitely not for everyone. Photography is forbidden. They key to fitting in is to adopt a quiet, unpresuming approach, and to act as if you're visiting someone's home—which you are. Otherwise, you might stir up a silent who-let-this-one-out-of-the-cage vibe that no amount of *awa* will dispel.

On Saturday in Hilo, you can drop in for an art class at **Kahuina Gallery** kids (128 Kilauea St., corner of Kilauea and Mamo sts.; ☎ 808/935-4420; www.kahuina.org; 9:30am–1:30pm). Ken Charon, one of the eight members of this colorful artist cooperative housed in a funky old plantation-era building, offers technical pointers, moral support, and, if you like, assignments. Whether you've been painting for years or you still struggle with stick figures, you'll be welcomed. It costs $10 per session, and you bring whatever art supplies you'd like to use. A pencil and notebook will do fine. Artistic kids especially seem to love this. A similar open studio for artists is held at the **Art in the Iron Works Gallery** (1266 Kamehameha Ave.; ☎ 808/935-2300; www.artintheironworks.com; 6–9pm on the second and fourth Tues of the month; $5). Again, bring your own materials, whatever they may be.

ACTIVE HAWAII

If you want to do more on the Big Island than sunbathe on a beach or meander through the sights, this list of active vacations is for you.

WEST-SIDE ACTIVITIES

The Big Island's west side has the sunniest days, the best beaches, the calmest seas, the clearest waters, the greatest number of visitors, and, consequently, most of the outfits offering outdoor activities. Discounts abound. Look for coupons in the ubiquitous free visitors' publications, such as ***Big Island Gold*** and ***This Week Big Island.*** Also look online, particularly at **Tom Barefoot's Cashback Tours** (☎ 888/222-3601; www.tombarefoot.com). The discounts here are generally modest, usually around 5%, but they can go as high as 20%. Check the website first, then call the toll-free number with questions.

Expedia!Fun (☎ 800/770-0326; www.expedia.com) is another dependable online discounter—though not quite as user-friendly as Tom Barefoot's site. It takes a few clicks to navigate to the Big Island, then you enter the dates you'll be in Hawaii, and Expedia gives you a list of activities available at the time. Around Kailua town, Expedia!Fun also has **activities desks** (in the lobbies of the King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel, 75–5660 Palani Rd.; the Keauhou Beach Resort, 78–6740 Alii Dr.; and the Royal Sea Cliffs, 75–6040 Alii Dr.) where you can get the same discounts offered online, but in person.

Snorkeling

The generally calm, clear waters of the Kona and Kohala coasts are well known for their abundance of marine life and incredible visibility. Exploring these waters with a mask and snorkel can be a highlight of a trip to Hawaii, as well as some of the simplest, cheapest fun you can have.

You can rent a mask, snorkel, and fins (and a variety of other beach gear) at **Kona Boys** (79–7536 Hwy. 11, Kealakekua; ☎ 808/328-1234). Snorkel gear here goes for $6 per day or $25 per week. In Kailua-Kona, you can rent snorkel gear at **Jack's Diving Locker** (75–5813 Alii Dr., at Coconut Grove Marketplace; ☎ 808/329-7585) for $7.50 per day, with the price dropping to $6 per day if you hold on to it for at least 5 days. **Snorkel Bob's** (75–5831 Kahakai Rd.; ☎ 808/329-0770) has the cheapest rates around, but the cheapest-quality gear, too, at $2.50 per day or $9 per week. Bob's will, however, try to persuade you to upgrade to better-quality gear, for as much as $14 per day and $45 per week. ***Tip:*** The quality of the snorkel gear isn't nearly as important as how well the mask seals against your face. To test the seal, place the mask on your face and inhale through your nose. If a vacuum forms that holds the mask in place, you've got a good fit. A bad fit will leak.

If you plan to use your snorkel gear for a week or longer, it makes sense to buy it; go to **Wal-Mart** (75–1015 Henry St.; ☎ 808/334-0466).

Among the better west Hawaii snorkeling spots, check out these five favorites:

Kahaluu (kids) (p. 379) is a popular beach where the near-shore reef's fragile coral has been pretty thoroughly trampled to death. But fish still thrive. The best snorkeling is in the deeper waters to the immediate north, where the coral is alive and too deep to step on.

Snorkeler Etiquette: Hands Off Coral, Turtles & Dolphins

- The living part of a **coral reef** is a thin membrane of fragile, tiny organisms that die *en masse* when stepped on or even touched gently by hand. Snorkel lightly.
- Snorkelers in Hawaii often encounter **green sea turtles** going about their day. Touching or chasing them is not only rude as far as the turtles are concerned, but it can be construed as harassment under state and federal law, both of which carry heavy fines on offenders.
- Misguided snorkelers chase **dolphins,** which is illegal. Enlightened snorkelers enjoy dolphins from afar, hoping the pod will come their way. Lucky snorkelers mind their own business, and suddenly dolphins appear.

Hononaunau Bay, aka **Two Step** (p. 379), has clear blue waters, a sudden drop-off and a turtle cleaning station, where sea turtles let tiny fish nibble their shells clean. This is one of the most popular scuba and snorkeling spots on the island. Finding free parking can be a headache on weekends, but there's a private pay lot that charges $2.

Puako Beach Drive (p. 381) has lots of spots to chose from (look for the blue beach access signs), and chances are usually good you can get one all to yourself. It's tricky getting in and out of the water over the rocks at most of the sites, but excellent snorkeling awaits, especially near the Church of Ascension. There's an easier entry point at Puako Village End, at the end of the road.

Kua Bay (p. 380) has underwater pinnacles that draw a lot of fish, off the north point.

At **Hapuna Beach** (p. 381), if you walk to the northern end, in front of the Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel, and snorkel around the point, you'll discover a private little cove with lots of fish.

Kayaking Kealakekua

The state is considering a restriction on individual kayak rentals on the bay, which is a protected conservation zone. But kayak tours, where guides can steer kayakers around resting dolphins rather than right through them, would still be allowed. (For updates, call the State of Hawaii, Department of Land and Natural Resources at ☎ 808/587-0440. If you can't get a straight answer there, any Kona-area kayaking- or snorkel-tour company can fill you in.)

In the meantime, kayak rentals are widely available along Highway 11 between Kailua-Kona and Kealakekua Bay. **Kona Boys** (79–7536 Hwy. 11, Kealakekua; ☎ 808/328-1234), for instance, rents individual kayaks for $27 per day, and doubles for $47, and gives good briefings on low-impact dolphin interactions. The launching area at Napoopoo Wharf is a mile away from the snorkeling area at Cook's monument.

A Historic Bay with Spectacular Snorkeling

Kealakekua Bay ★★★ (10 miles south of Kailua Kona, near the town of Captain Cook at the bottom of Napoopoo Rd.) has some of the best snorkeling on the Big Island. On the north end, at Kaawaloa Cove, colorful coral gardens filled with fish and other sea creatures sit at the top of a drop-off plunging to 100 feet and creating a dramatic snorkel spot. The waters are generally protected and crystal clear. This is where Captain Cook was killed in a skirmish with Hawaiians in 1779. A 29-foot-tall monument to Cook erected by the Commonwealth of Australia in 1878 stands near the spot where he fell, and right before the very best snorkeling area. Most visitors get to this remote end of the bay on commercial snorkeling tours, which range in price from $65 to $105, although you can also hike there for free (p. 413).

Pod problems: Kealakekua Bay has dolphins, but don't get your hopes up for an up-close interspecies encounter. The dolphins use the bay's protected waters to rest between hunts. Unfortunately for them, some of the bay's hundreds of daily human visitors are drawn to the dolphins' bedrooms to see if any of them want to play. As you can imagine, you, as a resting dolphin, might find it hard to get the rest you need with such interruptions. The human impact seems to be taking a toll. An increase in the number of snorkelers visiting Kealakekua Bay has coincided with a decrease in the number of dolphins. At press time, the state was mulling over restrictions on access to the bay to protect the dolphins and other marine life. In the meantime, it's best to appreciate dolphins from afar. If you see them, resist the urge to swim into their midst. They might come to you, but if not, it's not meant to be.

Several outfits offer kayak tours, including **Adventures in Paradise** (81–6367 Hwy. 11; ☎ 808/323-3005 or 888/371-6035; www.bigislandkayak.com; daily morning and afternoon tours), run by a husband-and-wife team who lead great 4-hour tours without disturbing sleeping dolphins, snacks and snorkeling included, for $129 per person.

Kealakekua Tour Boats

Four tour-boat operators have permits to do business in Kealakekua Bay, one using catamarans and the others using inflatable rafts. All offer morning and afternoon tours. Snorkeling is best in the morning, before the winds come up. Tours are cheaper in the afternoon, when most of the companies lower their rates. Here are the island's four companies:

Fair Wind Cruises ★★ (Keahou Bay; ☎ 808/322-2788; www.fair-wind.com) carries 100 passengers aboard its 65-foot catamaran. Morning costs are $105 for adults and $65 for children 12 and under. Afternoon tours cost $69 for adults and $43 for children. Fair Wind Cruises has the largest, most comfortable boat. It also carries the largest crowd of other snorkelers with it, which is the trade-off.

Two Ways to Explore the Deep Without Leaving Your Seat

One of the most interesting and unusual tours on the Big Island is the submarine exploration of a 25-acre reef in Kailua Bay. The 65-foot ***Atlantis VII* submarine** (kids) ★★ (Kailua Pier; ☎ 800/548-6262 or 808/329-6626; adults $85, children 11 and younger $45, both including tax) dives to over 100 feet and quietly hums about the reef, past scores of fish who seem indifferent toward the capsule full of alien species in their midst. A tender takes you out to the sub, which dives at various spots on different days, ranging from a half mile offshore to more than a mile. The whole tour takes an hour, with about 35 minutes spent underwater. When business is slow and the sub only half full, it might dive along a ledge just offshore; this is the most spectacular dive site, but the captain will go there only if all of the passengers fit onto one side of the vessel, so everyone gets a front row-view of the vertical wall outside their porthole.

For a more budget-oriented sight of Kona's underwater world, take a ride on the glass-bottom boat ***Marian*** (departs from Kailua Pier; ☎ 808/324-1749; adults $30, children ages 6–13 $15; www.konaglassbottomboat.com). The tours, which last just under an hour, leave at 10:30am, 11:30am, and 12:30pm Monday through Saturday. The *Marian* has the lines of an old admiral's tender, with her wide, low-slung beam, her rounded bow and stern, and her elliptical portholes. She's actually a modern boat, though, that the captain built in his backyard. Forty-four passengers can sit comfortably in her shady cabin, peering out at the reef 15 to 20 feet below.

Sea Quest (Keahou Bay; ☎ 808/329-7238; www.seaquesthawaii.com) carries 6 to 12 people aboard its inflatable rafts, charging $85 for adults and $72 for children 12 and under for the morning trips, and $64 for adults and $54 for children in the afternoons. The rafts explore sea caves, lava tubes, and a blow hole along the coast on the way there. Look for $10-off coupons in the free visitor magazines all around the Big Island.

Captain Zodiac (Honokohau Harbor; ☎ 808/329-3199; www.captainzodiac.com) carries up to 16 people on its rafts. If you go online, to its pirate-themed website, or pick up one of the island's ubiquitous free visitor magazines, you'll find a coupon for $10 off Captain Zodiac's normal rates of $87 for adults and $72 for children 12 and under. There are no afternoon discounts.

Dolphin Discoveries (Kealakekua Bay; ☎ 808/322-8000; www.dolphindiscoveries.com) stops first at Kealakekua Bay, then, when Fair Wind Cruises shows up with it crowd, it sets off down the coast for a second snorkel at Honaunau Bay. It charges $88 for adults, and $65 for children. The afternoon tours, which stay in Kealakekua Bay, cost $65 for everyone. Web specials cut $10 off the morning rates and $5 off afternoon rates.

Who Gets the Fish?

In Hawaii, it's customary for the charter fishing boat to keep the fish. This may seem unfair to the fisherman who paid to catch the thing, but it's an almost universal practice. Sometimes, a boat will divvy up the catch and send you back to the hotel with, maybe, 20 pounds of ahi—which raises another question: What do you do in a hotel with so much fish?

Kealakekua by Foot

It's possible to hike down to the Captain Cook Monument, but it's not an easy walk. From Highway 11, turn onto Napoopoo Road; the trail begins about 750 feet from the intersection, at the second telephone pole. It's about an hour-long hike down, with a constant 1,300-foot descent along an unmaintained trail. Go early, while it's cool, bring food and water, and make a day of it. Then hike back up after it's cooled off. The trail can be a challenge when the weather's cool, and utterly miserable when it's hot.

Deep-Sea Fishing

With generally calm seas and a seafloor that plunges to open ocean depths just a few miles from shore, Kailua-Kona has perfect conditions for deep-sea fishing. The majority of west Hawaii's sports fishing fleet ties up at Honokohau Harbor, 5 miles north of Kailua-Kona. Hundreds of charter boats here offer fishing trips, lasting from 4 to 8 hours and varying widely in price. Some are outlandishly well-appointed yachts with air-conditioning, satellite TV, and attentive crews. Others are tiny work-a-day vessels with no shade, oily bilge water sloshing about, and curmudgeonly captains who wouldn't pay a crew even if they could find one. Most boats fall in between. A good way to make sure you don't end up on a dog is to book through **The Charter Desk** (Honokohau Harbor; ☎ 888/566-2487 or 808/329-5735). It handles about 50 boats, all over 30 feet, and all vetted to weed out vessels of dubious character. Four-hour **private charters** range in price from $400 to $550, 6-hour charters run from $500 to $650, and 8-hour charters run from $700 to $1,200. The boats carry up to six guests and generally have four rods out. If you're serious about fishing, a private charter is the way to go. Otherwise, consider a **shared charter,** where you don't get the whole boat to yourself, but you generally pay less. The 38-foot ***Sea Wife II*** (☎ 808/329-1806), for instance, carries up to eight anglers on 4-hour morning or afternoon tours for $80 per fisherman, with ride-alongs boarding for $43. You have to share the rods and the chairs with the other guests, but whatever beer you bring is all yours.

Surf Lessons

The Big Island doesn't have the abundance of surf spots or the nice sandy surfing beaches that Oahu has. But it does have surf and a large population of surfers who follow it closely. If you want to take lessons, a handful of schools offer them. **Hawaii Lifeguard Surf Instructors** (75–159 Lunapule St., Kailua-Kona; ☎ 808/344-0442; www.surflessonshawaii.com) has, as the name suggests, instructors who

are current or retired county lifeguards. A group lesson costs $70 for a 1-hour session or $115 for a 2-hour session (2 hr. is the way to go). Private lessons, for $95 to $165, are offered too. But with Hawaii Lifeguard's 3-to-1 student-teacher ratio, you're not missing anything by taking a group lesson. Students surf at Kahaluu Beach, the best beginners' spot in Kailua-Kona.

Ocean Eco Tours (74–425 Kealakehe Pkwy.; ☎ 808/324-7873; www.oceanecotours.com) offers 2- to 3-hour lessons (depending on how long students' paddling arms last) at 8:30am and 11:30am for $95, with a student-to-teacher ratio of no more than 4 to 1. ***Pauline Frommer's Hawaii special:*** Show this book at Ocean Eco Tours and you'll get 10% off of surf lessons, or any of the company's other activities, including scuba and whale-watching tours.

Jet-Skiing

If you want to buzz around Kailua Bay on a jet ski, there's only one jet-ski operator in town: **Aloha Jet Ski** (☎ 808/329-2754; Kailua Pier; 9am–4pm). Call for reservations (if a cruise ship is in port, *definitely* call for reservations) or just show up at the pier and find the red truck with ALOHA JET SKI written all over it. It costs $95 per hour including tax, or $60 per half-hour. Up to two adult riders can board the jet ski, or one adult and two kids, for $15 per extra rider. To save $10, go before 10am.

Parasailing

To get up above the ocean, you can parasail with **UFO Parasail** (☎ 808/325-5836; Kailua Pier; www.ufoparasail.net; reservations required). Parasailing requires no skill on the part of the parasailor whatsoever. You just sit there, hanging from a parachute-like canopy at the end of a line hooked to a speed boat, which reels you out and back in as it tows you through the air. It costs $60 for a 7-minute ride to 400 feet and $70 for a 10-minute ride to 800 feet. The whole outing takes about an hour, and tours leave every hour on the hour from 8am until sometime in the afternoon, which changes depending upon demand. Save $5 by going on the 8am boat.

Horseback Riding

See p. 392 and 400.

Golf

Most of the Big Island's famed links lie on fields of black lava that would be devoid of any green had they not been transformed into some of the best golf courses in the world. The majority of the west-side courses belong to the Gold

A Driving Range

If you approach Kailua-Kona at night along Mamalahoa Highway from the north, the brightest lights you'll see come from a driving range called the **Swing Zone** (74-5562 Makala Blvd., corner of Kuikini Hwy.; ☎ 808/329-6909). You can get a 60-ball bucket for $6, which you can lug through the free putting green and chipping area before hitting the driving range itself. For another $6, you can putt your way through an 18-hole putting course shaped like the Big Island.

Tennis in Kona, Anyone?

The best public courts in Kona are located at **Old Airport Park,** just north of town. Municipal courts are free. For reservations or a detailed list of all Hawaii County courts, contact **Hawaii County Department of Parks and Recreation** (25 Apuni St., Hilo, HI, 96720; ☎ 808/961-8720; www.hawaii-county.com/parks/parks.htm).

Coast resorts, along the Kohala Coast, where green fees can exceed $200. But the price falls to more reasonable heights when the winds pick up and the "twilight" rates kick in, often after noon or 1pm. The other way to get onto these deluxe links without paying full rate is through **Stand-by Golf** ✯✯✯ (☎ 888/645-BOOK). Call between 7am and noon for same-day golf, and between 5:30 and 9pm, except Saturday, for next-day golf. Discounts range from 10% to 40%.

Some of the resorts allow only guests of their extravagantly priced hotels onto their greens, but I don't mention those courses here.

IN KOHALA

Of the oceanfront Gold Coast resorts, the **Hapuna Golf Course** (Hapuna Beach Prince Hotel; ☎ 808/880-3000; www.hapunabeachprince.com) has the lowest greens fees, at $151, with seasonal twilight rates. *Golf* magazine named this par-72, 6,029-yard course, which runs from the ocean to 700 feet, as Hawaii's most environmentally sensitive course.

The **Mauna Kea Golf Course** (Mauna Kea Resort; ☎ 808/880-3000) is a popular and pricey par-72, 6,365-yard course where the ocean is always present and stands between the third hole and its tee. Greens fees run $203, with a $182 twilight discount. *Golf Digest* called it the "number one golf course in Hawaii."

Mauna Lani Frances I'I Brown Championship Courses (Mauna Lani Resort; ☎ 808/885-6655; www.maunalani.com) started out as a single course that was later split in two, with 9 holes added to each half. The popular, par-72, 5,940-yard **South Course** fronts the sea. The par-72, 6,086-yard **North Course** makes good use of lava rocks and sharp-thorned kiawe trees. Greens fees for both are $205, with a $90 twilight rate.

The Waikoloa Beach Resort Courses (Waikoloa Resort; ☎ 877/924-5656 or 808/886-7888; www.waikoloabeachresort.com) have challenging holes, $175 greens fees, and variable twilight rates. The par-70, 6,566-yard **Waikoloa Beach Course** has plenty of white-sand bunkers and water features. The par-72, 7074-yard **Waikoloa King's Course** has broad, undulating fields snaking through the raw lava landscape.

The par-72, 6,791-yard **Waikoloa Village Course** (Waikoloa Resort; ☎ 808/883-9621; www.waikoloa.org), the central feature of the oddly located lava desert community of Waikoloa, has reasonable $75 greens fees, and holes challenging enough for serious golfers but not off-putting for beginners.

IN KONA

In Kona, the par-72, 7034-yard **Big Island Country Club** (71–1420 Mamalahoa Hwy., Kailua-Kona; ☎ 808/325-5044) has a dramatic layout 2,500 feet up the

Tennis in Hilo, Anyone?

Free covered public courts in rainy Hilo are at the Edith Kanakaole Tennis Stadium on Kalanikoa Street. Contact **Hawaii County Department of Parks and Recreation** (25 Apuni St., Hilo, HI, 96720; % 808/961-8720; www.hawaii-county.com/parks/parks.htm) for reservations.

slope of Hualalai volcano, and a pro shop in a yurt. Greens fees run $109, with a $79 twilight rate.

The **Kona Country Club** (7000 Alii Dr., Kailua-Kona; ☎ 808/322-2595) has a par-72, 6,281-yard ocean course with wild parrots running about, and $160 greens fees (with discounted rates of $104 at twilight, and $60 for 9 holes after 3pm). Greens fees at the par-72, 5,976 mountain course run $145, with a $94 twilight rate.

The **Makalei Hawaii Country Club** (72-3890 Hawaii Belt Road; ☎ 808/325-6625) has peacocks, pheasants, and turkeys on a par-72, 6,161-yard course that climbs to nearly 3,000 feet on the slope of Hualalai. Greens fees run $103, with a $71 twilight rate.

IN WAIMEA

Outside of town on the cool, wet side of Waimea is the **Waimea Country Club** (47-5220 Mamalahoa Hwy; ☎ 808/885-8053), a par-72, 6,661-yard country course, in the middle of cattle country and looking as much like Scotland as anywhere in Hawaii possibly could. Greens fees run $98, with a $75 twilight rate.

EAST SIDE ACTIVITIES

The rainy weather and choppy waters on the Windward Side of the island limit the appeal of ocean activities to visitors. You'll find some horseback riding and hiking tours, but vacation activities on this side of the island are mostly self-directed. There is, of course, golf.

Golf is cheaper and more naturally green on the wetter east side of the island, where local golfers outnumber visitors.

Golf

ALONG THE HAMAKUA COAST

At the **Hamakua County Club** (ocean side of Hwy. 19, Honokaa; ☎ 808/775-7244), you don't need a tee time. Just show up, drop $15 into the box, and play. It's got an unusual layout with 9 holes crisscrossing each other on a steep hillside.

IN HILO

The **Hilo Municipal Golf Course** (340 Haihai St.; ☎ 808/959-7711) is a popular, often soggy, par-71, 6006-yard course with greens fees of $29 on weekdays and $34 on weekends. Carts cost $16. The biggest challenge here is simply getting a tee time. Week days are your best bet.

Near downtown Hilo, the **Naniloa Country Club and Driving Range** (120 Banyan Dr.; ☎ 808/934-0044) is a 9-hole course that you play twice. If you count

both laps, it's a par-70, 5,615-yard course. Greens fees are $25 on week days, and $30 on weekends and holidays, with an additional $7.50 per lap with a cart. At the driving range, you get a bucket with 30 balls for $1.25.

IN VOLCANO VILLAGE

The par-72, 6547-yard **Volcano Golf & Country Club** (Piimauna Dr., off Hwy. 11 between mile markers 30 and 31, just past entrance to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park; ☎ 808/967-7331) is set among a misty pine and ohia forest at 4,200 feet, where the ball travels farther than you might expect due to the altitude, and where you're a just a mile from Kilauea Crater. Greens fees run $66, with a $53 twilight rate.

ATTENTION, SHOPPERS!

Souvenir shops are everywhere, but the better, more authentic purchases require pinpoint accuracy.

WEST HAWAII

If you're looking for a dashboard hula dancer, a shot glass printed with your name in Hawaiian, or matching aloha wear for the whole family, the tourist-thick heart of Kailua-Kona along Alii Drive has plenty of shops for you. But you'll find better deals a few blocks away. I hate to say it, but Kona's **Wal-Mart** (75–1015 Henry St.; ☎ 808/334-0466) has a big selection of Hawaii souvenirs at reasonable prices, as well as aloha shirts, mumus, and macadamia nuts. A better place to head is **Hilo Hattie—The Store of Hawaii** (75–5597A Palani Rd., at Kopiko Plaza, behind Burger King, Kailua-Kona; ☎ 808/329-7200), which has prices comparable to Wal-Mart's but a more extensive selection of stuff. In fact, Hilo Hattie (which also has a store in Hilo, and stores on all the other major islands) has possibly the largest pile of Hawaii kitsch in the world.

For a more distilled version of Hilo Hattie, right back in the thick of things along Alii Drive, check out **Made on the Big Island** (King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel, 75–5660 Palani Rd.; ☎ 808/326-4949). A lot of the so-called "Hawaiian" goods on sale at Hilo Hattie or Wal-Mart are actually made in Asia or the Philippines. Everything at Made on the Big Island was either produced in Hawaii, if not on the Big Island itself, or at least designed in the islands before its manufacturing was farmed out to foreign labor. The selection is not as extensive as Hilo Hattie's, but you'll probably find something worthwhile among the soaps, sarongs, seed starts, books, drums, coffees, calendars, nuts, and whatnot.

Nearby you'll find the most dignified souvenir shop in Kailua-Kona, the **Hulihee Palace Gift Shop** (75–5718 Alii Dr.; ☎ 808/329-6558; at Hulihee Palace). This tiny shop, unobtrusively tucked away on the grounds where Hawaiian royalty once dwelled, faces the sea and seems further removed than it actually is from the tumult along Alii Drive. Volunteers with The Daughters of Hawaii, whose 2,000 members all have family connections to Hawaii dating to at least 1880, run the palace and the gift shop. Among the finds are note cards with historic photographs of old Hawaii ($1.50), koa doorstops ($8.95), rare Niihau shell earrings (starting at $24), handmade Hawaiian dolls (starting at $13.95), and a small but thoughtful selection of books, including hard-to-find works such as David Malo's "Hawaiian Antiquities." Raised in the royal court and taught to

Weavings Like No Other

Some of Kona's best shopping experiences happen in outlying communities such as Holualoa, Captain Cook, and Honaunau. The old coffee-country town of Holualoa, 1,400 feet above Kailua town, has a solid collection of art galleries and unusual shops, such as **Kimura Lauhala Shop** (intersection of Hwy. 182 and Hwy. 180; ☎ 808/324-0053). Here, the age-old craft of weaving long, durable fronds of the hala tree into usable things, *lauhala* in Hawaiian, hangs on by a few thin fibers. The creation of lauhala was widely practiced in Hawaii before the introduction of Western fabrics undercut the need. Kimura Lauhala Shop started out in 1914 as a general store run by Japanese immigrants, the Kimuras, who bartered with Hawaiian lauhala weavers for mats, hats, and baskets, which went straight onto the store shelves. The lauhala trade grew so brisk that the Kimuras eventually turned their general store over entirely to lauhala. The family's fourth generation now runs the place, selling enough lauhala to keep the craft alive among a small group of weavers. Custom lauhala hats, modeled after any other hat in the world, can be ordered here ($90–$160). When I stopped by, there was a lauhala replica of the 10-gallon monster worn by Hoss, the lumbering cowhand in the 1960s TV Western *Bonanza*. You can also find floor mats, pillows, Kleenex box covers, door stoppers, napkin boxes, trivets, beer can holders, and a Kimura Lauhala Shop T-shirt—a rare concession to cotton.

read by missionaries at age 42, Malo put into writing much of what is known about the ways of ancient Hawaii today.

The **Kona Inn Farmers' Market** (75–7544 Alii Dr., Kona Inn Shopping Village parking lot, downtown Kailua-Kona; Thurs–Sun, 7am–5pm) is a great place to pick up flowers, coffee, produce, and souvenirs on the cheap. You can get mangoes, papayas, avocados, macadamia nuts, macramé bracelets, monkeypod wood bowls, and grass skirts with coconut shell bras, at reasonable prices and in a colorful, clamoring marketplace right in the center of things. Further south along Alii Drive, but too far to walk from town, you'll find another farmers market, **Alii Gardens Market Place** (75–7544 Alii Dr.; ☎ 808/334-1381). In a more peaceful, and permanent, location, this market sells somewhat more upscale souvenirs at somewhat more upscale prices.

For a gift unique to the Big Island, or just a guilty pleasure to eat while driving, stop at **Kona Chips** (Hwy. 11; heart of the town of Captain Cook, next to Manago Hotel; ☎ 808/323-3785) and pick up a bag, pail, or box of Big Island potato chips. They're made on-site, with the skin left on and a lot of the frying oil spun off by centrifugal force. You can pick up a 4.25-ounce bag of chips for $2.95, a 5-quart pail of them for $11.95, or a 4-gallon gift box for $24.95. You can get sweet potato chips, too.

For one of the best deals on macadamia nuts I've ever seen, keep traveling south on Highway 11 past Kona Chips to the town of Holualoa and the **Kona Coast Macadamia Nut & Candy Factory** (turn right on Middle Keei Rd. and you can't miss it; ☎ 808/328-8141). At the little gift shop of this working mac-nut

orchard and processing plant, you can buy 1-pound bags of roasted nuts for $7, or 3-pound bags of unroasted nuts for $9.50 (which you take home and roast yourself in the oven). The Nutty Hawaiian Bark, a 3-ounce shingle of dark chocolate or milk chocolate infused with mac nuts, for $1.95, is a popular concoction. There's a miniature working model of a macadamia-nut husking machine that demonstrates how the husking is done. It works just like the big husker in the factory here, only one nut at a time.

Hundreds of independent growers harvest the celebrated Kona coffee bean within the coffee-friendly micro-climate known as The Kona Coffee Belt. The little guys sell their crops to a handful of big guys, who process the freshly picked cherry, as it's called, into brewable coffee. **Greenwell Farms** (Hwy. 11 between mile markers 111 and 112, Kealakekua; ☎ 808/323-2275; closed Sun) is one of the larger big guys. It dries and roasts 20% of the world's Kona coffee supply. For all its clout as an industry titan, it's a remarkably laid-back operation, which you can see for yourself on the free 20- to 30-minute tours held throughout the day (there's no scheduled time, tours just happen when people who want to take them show up). If you take the tour, you'll come away saying knowledgeable things like, "The darker the bean, the less caffeine." But tour or no tour, this is a good place to stop to pick up some top quality Kona coffee. Prices—which fluctuate as if coffee were crude oil—are as good here as anywhere.

About 75 Big Island artisans, artists, and farmers sell their handiwork on consignment at the **Kealia Ranch Store** (86–4181 Mamalahoa Hwy., aka Hwy. 11, just past mile marker 101; ☎ 808/328-8744). Located in the country in an old Hawaii-style ranch home, the store has a rich selection of locally produced gifts and souvenirs. You can pick up an 8-ounce jar of honey produced on the ranch for $10. It comes in a bunch of different flavors, including macadamia nut and eucalyptus. For $24 you can pick up a CD holder or small photo album with covers made from retired Hawaii license plates. A $3,000 handmade Hawaiian quilt may be out of reach, but you can take home a packet of Hawaiian quilt napkins for just $3. And if you're staying in a place with cooking facilities, and you have a taste for duck eggs, you can pick up a dozen of them for $5.

EAST HAWAII

Hilo

On the east side of the island, most of the best shopping is concentrated in Hilo, with some worthwhile points of retail interest in outlying areas. For souvenirs, check out **Hilo Hattie** (Prince Kuhio Plaza shopping mall, corner of E. Makaala and Hwy. 11; ☎ 808/961-3077) and, across the street, **Wal-Mart** (325 E. Makaala; ☎ 808/961-9115). You'll find far more interesting and enjoyable shopping in Hilo's old, low-rise downtown, with its abundance of small shops catering to visitors and residents alike. Most are located along Kamehameha Avenue, which follows the broad arc of Hilo Bay.

If you're in Hilo on a Wednesday or a Saturday, walk around the **Hilo Farmers Market** ★★★ (corner of Kamehameha Ave. and Mamo St., downtown Hilo; ☎ 808/933-1000; crack of dawn until 3pm). When the last sugar mill on the Big Island closed in the 1990s and the plantation era officially ended, a new era of diversified agriculture began. Small farmers, many from the Philippines, now grow all sorts of produce on former cane land. A lot of it ends up spread out on

the tables here, including familiar things like lettuce, papayas, and eggplant, as well as exotic things like rambutan—an oversized grape inside a rubbery husk covered with red tentacles (they're good). In addition to produce, you'll find palm reading, chair massage, cheap T-shirts, and all the fruits of the Big Island's diversified arts-and-crafts industry.

For super cheap things woven from natural fibers, check the well-stocked aisles of **Dolly's Handicrafts** (50 Mamo St.; ☎ 808/933-9356; right next to Hilo Farmers Market). At this simple corner shop, fluorescently lit and loaded with bargain kitsch, you'll find handbags large and small, hats for all sized heads, lauhala boxes of various sizes, woven place mats, and coconuts carved into monkeys.

At **The Hawaiian Force** (140 Kilauea Ave.; ☎ 808/934-7171), you'll find a line of clothing and stickers popular among Native Hawaiians and sold nowhere else. All of it's designed by Craig Neff, the Hawaiian owner, who you'll typically find behind the counter. Many of the T-shirts ($17) and stickers ($1–$5) bear themes reflecting the deep resentments of many Hawaiians, but not everything is political. There's a "Got Poi?" shirt, Hawaii's spin on the American dairy industry's much mimicked "Got Milk?" campaign. There's also a "Hilo" shirt, which takes up the three meanings of the word, each shedding light on the town. (As Neff will explain, one meaning is "to twist or braid," which relates to the legend involving demigod Maui, who twisted ti leaf into a line to tie his canoe here; another meaning is the name of an ancient Tahitian navigator, who is said to have found his way to Hilo's shores; and the third is the name for the first day after the new moon, when the moon is a narrow sliver not unlike the crescent of Hilo Bay).

The Hawaiians followed the moon closely, giving it 30 different names, one for each night of the month. At **Basically Books** ★★★ kids (160 Kamehameha Ave.; ☎ 808/961-0144), you'll find all the names described on a poster of the ancient Hawaiian lunar calendar ($10.95), which correlates each night of the month with the fishing and farming activity best undertaken or avoided then (pole fishing's good on a new moon, but you wouldn't want to plant taro or sweet potatoes then). Basically Books is loaded with cool stuff like this poster, among its rich stock of maps, nautical charts, postcards, CDs, toys, games, knickknacks (thin koa bookmarks shaped like surfboards for $9.95), and, of course, books.

Nearby, **The Most Irresistible Shop** (256 Kamehameha Ave.; ☎ 808/935-9644) has an enticing collection of mostly Hawaiian and Asian odds-and-ends

Makuu Farmers Market

The **Makuu Farmers Market** ★ (Hwy. 130, after mile marker 7; Sundays) is part crafts fair, part swap meet, part roadside produce extravaganza, and pure Puna. You'll find crystals, carrot juice, cutlery, used books, free kittens, quack medicine, hot tamales, Hawaiian food, folk singers, pogs, kava for a dollar a cup, and good deals on souvenir Hawaii T-shirts ($7 apiece or four for $20). You'll also be able to pick up fresh, cheap organic produce. The market is off the highway in the middle of nowhere, and it's an excellent place to observe a cross-section of Puna's motley community of free-spirited souls.

Creative Minds in the Fiery Cradle of Creation

The earth's fiery creation process—and the 2.5 million visitors a year who visit Kilauea to see it—provide inspiration and a market for the Big Island's artistic community. About 300 artists display their works at the **Volcano Art Center** ✯✯ (in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park; ☎ 808/967-8222; www.volanoartcenter.org; $10 per vehicle park entrance fee), which occupies the old Volcano House, a 19th-century lodge moved from the crater rim when the new Volcano House was built. Look for the stuff by Dietrich Varez, the amiable but reclusive printmaker whose work draws largely from Hawaiian mythology, and whose studio, at the rainforest homestead he rarely leaves, looks out on Puu Oo, Kilauea's very active 600-foot cinder cone, which smolders just 8 miles away. Unlike most printmakers, who raise the value of their work by producing it in limited editions, Varez prints with the same hand-carved blocks indefinitely or until they wear out. That keeps his prices down. His smallest hand-printed, signed works sell for just $5. The largest go for $20. "Printmaking is pop art," Varez says. "And pop art should be affordable for everyone."

and curios with surprisingly reasonable prices, all squeezed into a surprisingly small space. Among its wares are hats, handbags, postcards, pocket charms, cookbooks, lanterns, women's clothing, dishware, body care potions, and jewelry, including cute sterling silver post earrings with a petroglyph turtle design ($12).

A short drive from downtown brings you to **Big Island Candies** (585 Hinano St.; ☎ 808/935-8890; 8:30am–5:30pm; www.bigislandcandies.com), where not only can you get free samples of all the different sweets they make (the chocolate-dipped shortbread is great), but you can also watch it being made. Six miles south of Hilo, fill up on free macadamia-nut treats at **Mauna Loa Macadamia Nut Corp.** (6 miles south of Hilo, on Macadamia Rd., off Hwy. 11; ☎ 808/966-8618), and view the inner workings of the macadamia-nut processing plant. My favorite thing here, though, is the long road through the 2,500-acre macadamia-nut orchard surrounding the factory.

Pahoa

Twenty miles south of Hilo, the curious little town of Pahoa serves as the commercial hub for scores of Big Island Bohemians pursuing alternative lifestyles in the rainforests, jungles, and perpetual summer of the vast Puna District. The town's boardwalk-lined main street has plenty of eating places and a handful of places to shop, including **Puna Style** (15–2903 Pahoa Village Rd.; ☎ 808/965-7592), which knows what Puna people like. Puna people like loose, flowing, cotton clothing. They like handmade handbags and backpacks, incense, wind chimes, flutes, and candles. They like things made in India, Bali, and Thailand, and they like things made with hemp. Puna Style also know that it's a rare Punatic, as Puna people like to call themselves, who has $40 to spend on a pair of pants, so things here are priced accordingly.

The Volcano Area

Sending flowers from Hawaii to someone on the mainland is a time-honored way of saying, "Thinking of you," as well as, "Look what you're missing." **Volcano Store** (19–4005 Haunani Rd., Volcano Village; ☎ 808/967-7210; next to the post office) has great prices on cut flowers, such as anthurium, though shipping ratchets up the bill. For about $45, you can send a bouquet of two orchids and a dozen anthurium to a mainland address. If the occasion calls for something more enduring than a bouquet, stop outside of Volcano Village at **Akatsuka Orchid Garden** (Volcano Hwy. between mile markers 22 and 23; ☎ 808/967-8234; daily 8:30am–5pm) and get a potted orchid. For about $40, you can have a modest one shipped to the mainland, root ball and all.

The **Volcano Winery** (35 Pii Mana Rd., off Hwy. 11 near mile marker 30; ☎ 808/967-7479) offers free tasting of its six wines: two made the traditional way with grapes, one made with Big Island honey, and three made with grapes and other fruit: lilikoi, guava, or jaboticaba (a South American thing). Bottles range in price from $14 to $16. The gift shop is loaded with Big Island–made goods, such as handmade ceramic tiles intended as drink coasters and jewelry made from olivine, the green volcanic mineral responsible for the unusual tint of the Big Island's Green Sands Beach (p. 385).

NIGHTLIFE ON THE BIG ISLAND

Believe it or not, there's quite a bit to do after (or just before) the sun sets.

WEST HAWAII

Sunset Cruises

A nice way to end a day and begin an evening is out on the ocean, sailing or motoring offshore as the sun sinks beneath the horizon. A dozen or more commercial boats offer sunset cruises, some with dinner and some without.

For a low-key, possibly even romantic experience, look into a sunset sail with **Sea Paradise** (leaves from Keahou Harbor; ☎ 808/322-2500 or 800/322-5662; www.seaparadise.com). On Saturday, a 46-foot catamaran carries 40 passengers out for pupus and a meal featuring tabbouleh salad and tossed greens, Korean-style barbecue short ribs, and teriyaki chicken fingers. The $95 ticket includes an open bar, with cocktails, and microbrews from the Kona Brewing Company on tap. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Sea Paradise runs cocktail cruises, with open bar, for $65.

If it's a booze cruise with dancing you'd prefer, go with **Body Glove Cruises** (☎ 808/329-4807). For $66 including tax (or $44 for children ages 5–17), you can sail aboard the 51-foot ***Kanoa,*** a double-decked trimaran with a high profile like a sea-going SUV. It's got live music (usually rock), two dance floors (one on

Bar Hours

Bars in Hawaii can serve alcohol until 2am. Many Kona-area nightspots will stay open that late when they're busy and close by 1am when they're slow.

Beach Volleyball after Dark

For a pickup game of volleyball, or for a nice place to sit on the grass and watch others play volleyball, check out the sand court at Coconut Grove Marketplace, right next to the **Hard Rock Cafe** (75–5815 Alii Dr.; ☎ 808/329-8866). People play all day, but the games really heat up after dark, when the weather cools down.

each deck), and an open bar. The hard-working ***Kanoa*** does snorkel trips to Pawai Bay during the day, and booze cruises at night that carry 85 passengers.

For Kona's largest and most shameless sunset cruise, check out **Captain Beans' Cruises** (☎ 808/329-2955; www.robertshawaii.com). Captain Beans' 150-foot steel-hulled ***Tamure*** isn't the most elegant vessel on the waters—it looks like an over-lit drilling platform masquerading as a Polynesian voyaging canoe, with it's rust-colored twin hulls and ridiculously undersized crab claw sails—but it costs just $65.50 for adults and $37.50 for kids 4 to 11 years old (with discount coupons widely available in the visitors' magazine), and it includes a so-so dinner (teriyaki beef and chicken, garlic bread, and salad). It carries 200 guests at a time, who board at Kailua Pier at 4:45pm and slowly motor offshore for 2 hours. There's a Polynesian dance review, and (I'm pretty sure) watered-down drinks (the first one's included with dinner). It's pure mass-tourism fun.

Luaus

With their shell-lei greetings, their fire dancers, and all the other conventions of the genre, Big Island luaus are lively and corny affairs. There are plenty here, but in my mind any one is as good, or as bad, as another. What's intriguing about the **Island Breeze Luau** (75–5660 Palani Rd., on grounds of the King Kamehameha Kona Beach Hotel; ☎ 808/326-4969; www.islandbreezeluau.com) is the historic setting. The luau grounds were once part of Kamakahonu (p. 390), the royal compound where King Kamehameha spent his last days, and where the most pivotal meal in Hawaiian history was eaten, the one in which Queen Kaahumanu persuaded Kamehameha's heir to the thrown, Liholiho, to dine with women, breaking a fundamental *kapu* prohibiting men and women from dining together and shattering the age-old religious order.

These days, every Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday, from 5:15 to 8:15pm, some 350 male and female luau-goers gather here for kalua pig, mai tais, and a Polynesian dance show. Most have no idea of the dining tradition they're carrying on—or that, at one time, enjoying an all-you-can-eat buffet with the opposite sex might have cost them far more dearly than the current rates: $65 for adults, $29 for children ages five to 12; $40 if you want to watch the show but not eat, tax and gratuity included. (Coupons for luaus abound in the free tourist booklets around town, so there's no need to pay full price.) The pig that's served roasts in the ground all day. If you go by in the morning, you can watch the cooks prepare it and, at 9:30am, drop it into the *imu,* the underground oven filled with rocks, banana leaves, and banana stalks.

Kava Mellows the Mind, Numbs the Gums

Kava, a mildly narcotic and entirely legal drink made from the root of the kava plant, calms the mind without dulling it and numbs the palate without diminishing its ability to detect the bitterness of kava. The ancient Hawaiians drank kava (they called it *awa*) for medicinal as well as recreational purposes. Lately kava has been making a comeback in Hawaii, and the easiest place to find it in Kona is at the **Kanaka Kava Bar** (75-5803 Alii Dr., at Coconut Grove Marketplace; ☎ 808/327-1660), a small, open-air bar near the outdoor volleyball court. The owner, Zack, grows his own kava along the Hamakua Coast, and he serves it in individual coconut shells for $4, or in large calabashes (five shells worth) for $12, both with fresh pineapple on the side. Like the regulars at a neighborhood tavern who keep their personal beer mugs behind the bar, Kanaka Kava regulars keep shells imprinted with their names on a shelf behind the counter. Guzzling the first shell as quickly as you can is the customary way to get started. You can nurse the next ones after that, though kava's bitterness discourages sipping and encourages quaffing. Zack serves a variety of pupus, such as kalua pig, poi, and squid luau (taro greens and squid simmered in coconut milk). The food isn't especially good, but it helps the kava go down, and by the second or third shell you won't be much of a food critic anyway.

Nightclubs and Bars

Huggo's on the Rocks (75–5828 Kahakai Rd.; ☎ 808/329-1493; right off Alii Dr.) has a thatched roof over its open-air bar, a sand floor, and a torch-lit waterfront location, all of which give it its postcard-perfect tropical allure. A hula dancer appears each evening from 6:30 to 8:30pm, and everybody gets to dance from 8:30pm onward, with a band playing contemporary Hawaiian and oldies. Huggo's is a great nightspot in every respect except for the steep drink prices ($6.50 for a little 12-ounce beer—in a plastic cup).

Drinks are cheaper nearby, at **Lulu's Restaurant & Bar** (75–5819 Alii Dr.; ☎ 808/331-2633; at the Coconut Grove Market), which has a dance floor that attracts a young and sometimes rowdy crowd, with DJs on Friday and Saturday and an occasional live band. Wednesdays are for amateur sumo wrestling, where contestants don fat suits and try to push each other out of a ring. Free line-dancing lessons happen on Sundays, and free salsa lessons are offered Tuesdays, both beginning at 8pm. Happy hour runs daily from 3 to 6pm, with $1 tropical well drinks, and beer ranging from $3 to $5.

If Lulu's becomes too raucous of a meat market for you, try **Durty Jakes Café & Bar** (75–5819 Alii Dr.; ☎ 808/329-7366), downstairs from Lulu's. Jakes has a meat market tendency as well, though of a mellower, slightly more mature nature. It has live music on Friday and Saturday, when a small dance floor sometimes comes to life. And it has karaoke on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday, which keeps the rougher element away. During happy hour, which starts at noon and goes until 6pm, $1 is knocked off well drinks and beer ranges from $2.50 to $4.25.

Toward the back of Coconut Grove Marketplace, behind the outdoor volleyball court, you'll find **Oceans Sports Bar & Grill** (75–5819 Alii Dr.;

Pupu to You

It wasn't so long ago in Hawaii when cocktail lounges throughout the islands commonly served free pupus with your second or third round of drinks. Times have changed and free pupus have gotten harder and harder to find. But the tradition is alive and well in slow-to-change Hilo at a handful of laid-back places around the city. My all-time favorite is **Kim's Karaoke Lounge** (☎ 808/935-7552), a blue-collar, after-work, sports-bar-type place where tourists almost never enter. If you go, be prepared for some looks. A friend and I once encamped at Kim's, and after the third round of drinks, seven exquisite little pupu platters appeared at our booth: bacon-wrapped asparagus, caramelized weenies, pork 'n tofu, chicken katsu, chicken with peanut sauce, tempura sweet potatoes and onions, and an enormous pile of ahi sashimi on a bed of freshly grated cabbage with mustard sauce. The variety of pupus at a place like Kim's might vary, and the spread can range from humble to lavish, but it invariably includes ahi sashimi.

There is protocol involved in partaking of the free pupus. First, never refer to them as "free pupus." Second, don't mention pupus at all until at least your second round of drinks. Third, once it's established that you're there to stay a while and spend some money on drinks, casually say something like, "You guys got pupus?" Fourth, just leave it at that—don't ask any more questions. You have no control, at this point, over what shows up at your table anyway. Fifth, tip generously (because, you know, freedom has a price).

☎ 808/327-9494). It's a dark and roomy place with two brightly lit pool tables and more TV screens devoted to surfing than basketball, football, or hockey—as it should be in Hawaii. Oceans has a dance floor where bands play or DJs spin Wednesday through Thursday. Happy hour runs from 3 to 6pm, with beers in the $2 to $3 price range, well drinks for $2.50, and $2 off other mixed drinks. It's got some outdoor seating in the restaurant area, where kids are allowed, making it a family-oriented kind of bar.

When well-known bands come to town, chances are they'll appear at a somewhat hard-to-find venue in Kona's old industrial area, the **Kona Brewing Co. & Brewpub** (75–5629 Kuakini Hwy., go north on Kuakini Highway to intersection with Kaiwi St., turn right on Kaiwi, turn right on Pawai St., and go to end of Pawai; ☎ 808/334-2739; www.konabrewingco.com). Check the website for a map and to see who's scheduled to play. Regardless of the entertainment schedule, this place is worth finding if you're into microbrewed beer. The bartenders pour nine regular brews, including the light and delicate Big Wave Golden Ale, the mildly hoppy Longboard Lager, and the full-bodied Castaway IPA (my favorite). Pints cost $4.75, except during the 3-to-5pm happy hour, Monday through Friday, when they go for $3.50. The beer is excellent, but the pizza and pub fare could be a lot better. On Sunday there's live local music—Hawaiian, classical guitar,

blues, or something along those lines. If the indoor seating gets too loud, the outdoor seating—set amid Tiki torches and tropical foliage—will be mellower. If you're a real beer nut, you can come back during the day for the **free brewery tour,** Monday through Friday at 10:30am and 3pm.

EAST HAWAII

East Hawaii nightlife is not quite an oxymoron, but it's close; it's definitely not what this side of the island is known for. The free pupu bars (p. 425) are where much of the local population heads after dark. You should also consider the following:

For a pleasant evening of good beer and free shuffleboard, **Nichols Public House** ✯✯✯ (776 Kilauea Ave., Hilo; ☎ 808/934-8782; www.nicholspublichouse.com; Mon–Sun 11am–2am) is the place to go. This affordable English-style pub has live music on Fridays and Saturdays ($5 cover after 8pm, $3 before), open-mic night on Mondays, shepherd's pie, fish and chips, bangers and mash, indoor and outdoor seating, and 21 good beers on tap (on a good night). Hawaii's taste in beer traditionally falls along the Heineken and Budweiser end of the beer spectrum, and Hilo had long suffered from a dearth of malty, hoppy brews. So when Nichols opened in 2005, the town's serious beer drinkers rejoiced, and a regular crowd of barflies immediately took up stools. Students from the University of Hawaii, Hilo's quirky hipsters, occasional sports fans, and an ever-changing procession of out-of-towners jam into Nichols at night, especially on weekends, and keep the place from getting musty.

The **University of Hawaii at Hilo Performing Arts Center** (200 E. Kaiwili St.; ☎ 808/974-7310; www.uhhtheatre.com) has a regular series of concerts, dramas, musicals, Hawaiian cultural performances, and other events throughout the spring and fall. Student productions of standards like "Oklahoma" share the schedule with visiting performers from the mainland and beyond. You can find more information online, and buy tickets there too.

Like a lot of downtown Hilo, the **Palace Theater** (38 Haili St.; ☎ 808/934-7777; www.hilopalace.com) is a restoration work in progress, and in this case, one with the paint peeling and the Grecian urns missing from its neoclassical facade. I get the feeling that it might never be completed, but it doesn't really matter; in the meantime, there's a full schedule of films and live performances throughout the year. The lineup ranges from community productions to international acts. Built in 1925, the Palace was once the biggest thing in entertainment in east Hawaii. While much of its glory has faded, its purpose endures.

ABCs of the Big Island

American Express There's an office on the Kohala Coast at the **Hilton Waikoloa Village** (☎ 808/886-7958) and **The Fairmont Orchid in Mauna Lani Resort** (☎ 808/885-2000). To report lost or stolen traveler's checks, call ☎ 800/221-7282.

Dentists In an emergency, contact **Dr. Craig C. Kimura** at Kamuela Office Center (☎ 808/885-5947); in Kona, call **Dr. Frank Sayre,** Frame 10 Center, behind Lanihau Shopping Center on Palani Road (☎ 808/329-8067); in Hilo, call **Hawaii Smile Center,** Hilo Lagoon Center, 101 Aupuni St. (☎ 808/961-9181).

Doctors In Hilo, the **Hilo Medical Center** is at 1190 Waianuenue Ave. (☎ 808/974-4700); on the Kona side, call **Hualalai Urgent Care,** 75–1028 Henry St., across the street from Safeway (☎ 808/327-HELP).

Emergencies For ambulance, fire, and rescue services, dial ☎ **911** or call ☎ 808/961-6022. To call the **Hawaii Police Department,** call ☎ 808/326-4646 in Kona, ☎ 808/961-2213 in Hilo. The Poison Control Center hot line is ☎ 800/362-3585.

Hospitals Hospitals offering 24-hour urgent-care facilities include the **Hilo Medical Center,** 1190 Waianuenue Ave., Hilo (☎ 808/974-4700); **North Hawaii Community Hospital,** Waimea (☎ 808/885-4444); and **Kona Community Hospital,** on the Kona Coast in Kealakekua (☎ 808/322-9311).

Post Office All calls to the U.S. Post Office can be directed to ☎ 800/275-8777. There are local branches in Hilo at 1299 Kekuanaoa Ave., in Kailua-Kona at 74–5577 Palani Rd., and in Waimea on Lindsey Road.

Weather For conditions in and around Hilo, call ☎ 808/935-8555; for the rest of the Big Island, call ☎ 808/961-5582. For marine forecasts, call ☎ 808/935-9883.

8 The Essentials of Planning

by David Thompson

A PERENNIALLY POPULAR T-SHIRT IN HAWAII HAS A SIMPLE TWO-WORD message that captures the spirit of the islands perfectly: "Hang Loose." Tapping into that spirit comes naturally to people. Just go, kick back, and relax.

Nonetheless, tending to some nuts and bolts before you arrive in the islands will enhance your experience and save you money. This chapter sums up the basics that you'll need to plan your trip.

WHEN TO VISIT

There really isn't a bad time to visit the islands. Hawaii does, however, have a 6-month wet season and a 6-month dry season, known within the islands as "winter" and "summer." **Winter** begins in October and runs through April, while **summer** begins in May and runs through September. There's no discernable spring or fall. While it rains in the mountains year-round, you're more likely to get rained out at the beach during the winter wet season. It doesn't happen much, but it happens.

Hawaii's coolest months are February and March, and its warmest months are August and September. But generally speaking, the **year-round temperature** doesn't vary much. At the beach, the average daytime high in summer is 85°F (29°C), while the average daytime high in winter is 78°F (26°C); nighttime lows are usually about 10°F cooler. But how warm it is on any given day really depends on *where* you are on which island.

The biggest surf occurs in the winter, on the north shores. In summer, south shores get the waves. Hurricane season in the North Pacific runs from June into November. Most hurricanes pass at sea, causing stormy weather but no serious problems. Occasionally one makes land. The last, Hurricane Iniki, hit Kauai in 1992, killing eight people and causing $2 billion in damage.

HIGH SEASON & LOW TOURIST SEASONS

If you have any control over what time of year to go to Hawaii, plan to visit the islands in the spring or fall. Those are the low seasons for tourism, when crowds are at their thinnest and prices at their lowest. Both accommodations and airfares tend to cost less from mid-April to mid-June, and from mid-September to mid-December. Family travelers in June, July, and August account for the summer high season, while holiday travelers and snowbirds drive the high season that lasts from mid-December to mid-April, as well as the mini–high season that lasts for a week around Thanksgiving.

WHALE SEASON

The biggest drawback of hitting Hawaii during the low seasons is that you tend to miss the whales. Each winter an estimated 5,000 humpback whales migrate

The Climate at a Glance

The main Hawaiian Islands sit high in the Tropics, just beneath the Tropic of Cancer. Hawaii's weather is characterized by mild temperatures, moderate humidity, northeasterly trade winds, and the occasional severe storm. Snow, hail, tornadoes, hurricanes, thunderstorms, lightning, flooding, and droughts all occur, but not with the frequency or severity that they do on the mainland. Hawaii's mountains are responsible for a highly variable climate that, within the space of a few miles, can include rainforest, deserts, and alpine tundra. The Big Island, with the two tallest mountains, Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea, has terrain so varied it includes 11 of the world's 13 climatic zones. Hawaiian mountains interrupt the flow of moist ocean air blowing across the North Pacific, wresting precipitation from it that keep the windward and mountain areas green. The leeward sides of the islands tend to be drier, because the majority of moisture has been stripped from the wind by the time it crosses the mountains.

from cold Arctic waters to mate, calve, socialize, and generally make a big splash in Hawaiian waters. They appear off all of the Hawaiian Islands, but they're particularly fond of the protected shallow waters off Maui's south shores. Whale season officially runs from mid-December until mid-May (so it overlaps a little with the spring low season, but with dwindling numbers of whales). February is the peak month. All sorts of boats around the islands, especially out of Maui's Lahaina and Maalaea harbors, offer whale-watching tours. You can easily spot whales from shore (for free), especially when seas are calm. On rough choppy days, look for their telltale blows, clouds of mist that appear on the surface as they purge their blow holes. You'll notice when whale-watching that humpbacks have some very deliberate and defined moves. These include:

- **Head rises,** aka **sky hops.** Whale holds enormous head out of the water, vertically, probably for a look around.
- **Breaches.** Whale launches itself out of the water and lands on its back, making an enormous splash.
- **Tail slaps.** Whale smacks flukes on surface of water, usually repeatedly. Possibly a warning.
- **Peduncle slaps.** Like the tail slap, but involving the whole rear section of the whale.
- **Blows.** Clouds of mist released when whale purges its blow hole upon surfacing. Adult humpbacks breathe every 10 to 15 minutes, although they can hold their breath as long as 45 minutes. Calves breath more often.

Warning: Humpback whales are protected under the Endangered Species Act, and harassing, injuring, killing, or approaching them within 300 feet is prohibited. The National Marine Fisheries Service has jurisdiction.

Visitor Information

The **Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau** (☎ 800/464-2924; www.gohawaii.com), along with its neighbor island branches, is the state's official source for visitor information—but not a very good one, at least over the phone (the website is more useful). If you dial the information line, the operators will tell you about the weather, they'll read from the members list of the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau, and they'll refer you to the Web. It's like pulling teeth to get much more from them. Less constrained, more informal, and more helpful are the people who work at the **information booths at the airports.** They're mainly there to answer the same question over and over again—um, where are the rental cars?—but they'll take a stab at anything, and they answer questions over the phone. Here are the numbers:

- **Hilo International Airport** (☎ 808/934-5838)
- **Honolulu International Airport** (☎ 808/836-6413)
- **Kahului Airport** (☎ 808/872-3893)
- **Kona International Airport** (☎ 808/329-3423)
- **Lihue Airport** (☎ 808/246-1448)
- **Molokai Airport** (☎ 808/567-6361)

Hawaii's Visit-Worthy Annual Events

Hawaii has events and festivals throughout the year, and I've listed some of the most popular annual ones here. The Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau's website (www.gohawaii.com) provides up-to-date calendars (one of the more useful services of the HVCB).

January

The Mercedes Championships. Winners of the PGA Tour events meet at Kapalua's Plantation Course on Maui. For more information, call ☎ **866/669-2440.**

The Ka Molokai Makahiki. At the Kaunakakai Town Baseball Park on Molokai, the ancient harvest festival of *makahiki,* a time of peace and tribute to the *alii,* is reenacted with hula, games, sports, crafts, and food. Held in late January. Call ☎ **808/553-3876** for details.

The Morey World Bodyboarding Championship. The world's most skilled and gutsy body boarders shoot Oahu's Banzai Pipeline on their bellies and knees.

February

Hula Bowl. A competition held in the War Memorial Stadium on Oahu, in January or February, between the nation's top college football players. Go to **www.hulabowlhawaii.com** for more information.

NFL Pro Bowl. A week after the Super Bowl, the best players from the NFC face off against the all-stars of the AFC in Oahu's Aloha Stadium. Visit **www.nfl.com/probowl** for details.

Sony Open. The Waialae County Club hosts the first full-field event in the PGA Tour, with proceeds going to Hawaii charities. See **www.sonyopeninhawaii.com**.

Great Aloha Run. This annual 8.15-mile footrace starts at Aloha Tower in downtown

Honolulu and ends at Aloha Stadium; it's a big, inclusive event—with elite runners, parents with strollers, people in wheelchairs, and people who walk but don't run. Proceeds go to local charities. To get more information, call ☎ **808/528-7388** or go to **www.greataloharun.com**.

Panaewa Stampede Bud Light Pro-Am Rodeo (next to the Panaewa Rainforest Zoo, south of Hilo). This Big Island event features amateurs and pros, young and old, and all the traditional rodeo events, plus Cowboy Poker, in which players sit at a table in a bull ring with an aggravated bull. The last one at the table wins.

March

Run to the Sun. Sinewy ultra-distance runners hoof it 36.2 miles from sea level to the summit of Maui's Haleakala at 10,023 feet. To lace up or find out more about watching the race, call ☎ **808/573-7584.**

T & C Surf Women's Pipeline Pro. The world's top competitive female surfers and body boarders kick off their world-tour season at Oahu's Banzai Pipeline sometime during its 2-week holding period around early March. To learn more, call ☎ **808/781-2535** or go to **www.banzaibetty.com**.

The Hawaiian Music Awards. This 4-day music festival brings out Hawaii's top musicians; the public votes for the winners online. Call ☎ **808/951-6699.**

Kona Brewers Festival. For 40 bucks a ticket, you'll get a glass, some beers, and all you can eat at this event that brings Hawaii's microbrewers and those who support them together on the Big Island for food, music, dance, and, most importantly, beer. For more information, call ☎ **808/331-3033** or visit **www.konabrewersfestival.com**.

Kona Chocolate Festival. Expect live music, wine, champagne, local chefs, caterers, ice cream makers, and gourmet chocolatiers at this Big Island festival. Go to **www.konachocolatefestival.com** for details.

April

East Maui Taro Festival. This 2-day celebration of the staple of ancient Hawaii includes cultural demonstrations, food booths, arts and crafts, and a big taro-pancake breakfast. Held at the ballpark in rural Hana on Maui. Call ☎ **808/264-1553** for more information.

Hawaii Invitational Music Festival. Junior high, high school, and college drill teams, choirs, orchestras, and jazz bands come together for a week of free shows and friendly competition in Waikiki.

The Merry Monarch Festival. The world's largest hula competition, held at Edith Kanakaole Tennis Stadium in Hilo lasts 1 week, starting on Easter Sunday, and it's the worst possible time to try to find accommodations or automobile rentals in Hilo on the Big Island. Call ☎ **808/935-9168** for details.

May

International Festival of Canoes. Master carvers from around the Pacific turn logs into canoes before your eyes—although slowly, very slowly. At Banyan Tree Park on Maui. To learn more, call ☎ **888/310-1117** or 808/667-9175 or go to **www.mauicanoefest.com**.

Honolulu Triathlon. Triathletes from around the world spend the day swimming, running, and cycling in this event, usually held in April or May. Call ☎ **866/454-6561** or go to **www.honolulutriathlon.com** to learn more.

Astroday. This event on the Big Island brings astronomers down from the telescope complex atop Mauna Kea to mingle with the general public at Prince Kuhio Mall in Hilo; includes all sorts of neat science stuff, as well as Hawaiian cultural presentations. For further information, call ☎ **808/932-2328** or 808/969-9101, or visit **www.astroday.net**.

June

Hawaiian Slack-Key Guitar Festival. Slack-key guitar is featured at this day-long, relax-on-the-lawn-type of event at

the Maui Arts & Cultural Center in Kahului. Call ☎ **808/242-7469** or visit **www.hawaiianslackkeyguitarfestivals.com**.

Kamehameha Day, June 11. Hawaii is the only state with a holiday honoring a king, and it does so on this day with a variety of events including a parade that fills the streets of Honolulu with floats, glamorous Pau riders, and marching bands, with an awards presentation at the end of the line. Festivities on the Big Island are equally compelling in North Kohala, where the boy who would be king was born. The fun begins at 8am, when 22-foot leis are draped around the statue of the king in the little town of Kapaau.

July

Makawao Parade & Rodeo. A traditional event in upcountry Maui, where the cowboys still roam. For more info, call ☎ **808/244-3530.**

Kapalua Wine and Food Festival. Cooking demonstrations, wine-tasting seminars, and winemaker dinners are some of the highlights of this event, an extended banquet of fine dinning and bold, compelling New World wines. For details, call ☎ **808/KAPALUA** or go to **www.kapaluamaui.com**.

Annual Molokai to Oahu Paddleboard Race. Paddlers from all over the world race 32 miles across the channel to Oahu, usually on the last Sunday of July. For details, call Mike Takahashi at ☎ **808/638-8208.**

Hawaiian Slack-Key Guitar Festival. Masters of the form, which involves a unique Hawaiian tuning, perform in Kaunakakai for free. To learn more, call ☎ **808/239-4336** or 808/226-2697 or go to **www.hawaiianslackkeyguitarfestivals.com**.

Queen Liliuokalani Keiki Hula Competition. More than 500 youngsters from two dozen hula *halau* dance in honor of Hawaii's deposed queen at the Neal Blaisdell Center in Honolulu. Call ☎ **808/521-6905** for more information.

Ukulele Festival. If you had any doubts that the ukulele was alive and well, they'll be gone by the time a ukulele orchestra, made up of 800 musicians, mostly children, leaves the stage at the Kapiolani Park Bandstand in Waikiki. For details, call ☎ **808/732-3739** or go to **www.ukulele-roysakuma.com**.

Prince Lot Hula Festival. Ancient and modern hula is presented at a beautiful location (the Moanalua Gardens in Honolulu), and held in honor of a Hawaiian monarch who ignored Western critics in his efforts to promote Hawaiian culture. Third Saturday of July.

Turtle Independence Day. On July 4, scores of endangered green sea turtles, raised in the ancient Hawaiian fishponds on the grounds of the Mauna Lani Resort in the Kohala District, are released into the wild. To learn more, call ☎ **808/885-6677** or visit **www.maunalani.com**.

Great Waikoloa Food, Wine & Music Festival. On the weekend closest to July 4, top Hawaii chefs and some from the mainland come together to present food, paired with wines from around the world. The event is accompanied by jazz and fireworks. For more information, call ☎ **808/886-1234** or go to **www.hiltonwaikoloavillage.com**.

Parker Ranch Rodeo. Hawaii's *paniolo* (cowboys) exhibit their considerable skills in Waimea, the heart of cowboy country. Find out more by calling ☎ **808/885-7311** or visiting **www.rodeohawaii.com**.

Crater Rim Run and Marathon. This event in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park traverses the volcanic landscape in 5-, 10-, and 26.2-mile races, or walks for the less competitive. Call ☎ **808/967-8222.**

August

Admission Day. A state holiday commemorating the day in 1959 when the Territory of Hawaii became the state of Hawaii. Celebrated statewide; third Fri in Aug.

Hawaii State Farm Fair. Hawaii's unique version of the state fair, held at Aloha Stadium in Honolulu, with farm animals, a Ferris wheel, and Spam *musubi* (a slice of fried Spam fastened to a Spam-shaped block of rice with a belt of seaweed—a local favorite). For more information, call ☎ **808/531-3531.**

Hawaiian Slack-Key Guitar Festival. Masters of the form, which involves a unique Hawaiian tuning, perform in Kapiolani Park for free. Call ☎ **808/239-4336** or 808/226-2697 or go to **www.hawaiianslackkeyguitarfestivals.com** to learn more.

Puu Kohola Heiau National Historic Site Anniversary Celebration. Hawaiian workshops, performances, and pride at the massive war temple King Kamehameha built near Kawaihae Harbor. For details, phone ☎ **808/882-7218.**

Annual Hawaiian International Billfish Tournament. Competitors from around the globe compete in the waters of Kailua-Kona at a sport where a strike is a good thing. To get more information, call ☎ **808/329-7311** or visit **www.konabillfish.com**.

September

Aloha Festivals. A widely disbursed series of parades and other events throughout the islands. For details, call ☎ **800/852-7960** or go to **www.alohafestivals.com**.

Great Molokai Mule Drag and Hoolaulea. Molokai's favorite beasts of burden are raced through the center of town in Kaunakakai, if you can call dragging a mule down the street by the reigns a race. To learn more, call ☎ **800/800-6367** or check out **www.molokai-hawaii.com**.

Taste of Lahaina. A festival built around Maui's most illustrious chefs, with plenty of entertainment, beer and wine, and 10,000 attendees. Get more info by calling ☎ **888/310-1117.**

Hawaiian Slack-Key Guitar Festival. Masters of the form, which involves a unique Hawaiian tuning, perform at the Hilton Waikoloa for free. For more information, call ☎ **808/239-4336** or 808/226-2697 or visit **www.hawaiianslackkeyguitarfestivals.com**.

October

Halloween in Lahaina. Front Street is closed to cars and turned over to 20,000 creatures of the night, when Lahaina thinks it's New Orleans at Mardi Gras, pre-Katrina.

Aloha Classic Wave Championships. Windsurfers launch from cresting waves and catch big air at the most illustrious windsurfing beach in the world, Hookipa Beach park, in the Pro World Tour's final event. See **www.alohaclassicwindsurfing.com**.

Maui County Fair. Hawaii takes the mainland county fair and makes it its own. To learn more, call ☎ **808/244-3530.**

Molokai Hoe Outrigger World Championship Race. A 40-mile Hawaiian canoe race across the rough channel between Molokai and Oahu and ending in Waikiki. Check out **http://holoholo.org/hoe**.

Halloween in Waikiki. The ordinarily crazy streets of Waikiki get even crazier on All Hallow's Eve, with ghosts and ghouls in grass skirts and flowered shorts.

Emalani Festival. A forest festival at Kokee State Park in honor of the Hawaiian monarch Queen Emma, who made a famous trek to the festival site with large retinue in 1871. For details, call ☎ **808/245-3971.**

Ironman Triathlon World Championship. Some 1,500 tawny, driven triathletes swim 2.4 miles, bike 112 miles, then run 26.2 miles, in a grueling all-day race under the Kona sun. If you get to the seawall on Alii Drive before 5:30am, you might succeed in staking out a spot to watch the 7am water start. To learn more, call ☎ **808/329-0063** or visit **www.ironmanlive.com**.

Hamakua Music Festival. The lush Hamakua Coast is the setting for live blues, jazz, rock, Hawaiian, and classical music performances. Go to **www.hamakuamusicfestival.org**.

November

Hawaii International Film Festival (various locations throughout state). A celebration of cinema from Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the United States, during the first 2 weeks of November. For details, call ☎ **808/528-FILM** or visit **www.hiff.org**.

Vans Triple Crown of Surfing. The three big events in pro-surfing—the Op Pro Hawaii, the O'Neill World Cup, and The Rip Curl Pro Pipeline Masters—run from November into December, with holding periods for each, when participants pray for surf and usually get it. Check out **www.triplecrownofsurfing.com**.

MasterCard PGA Grand Slam (last weekend of Nov). Top golfers and $1 million in prizes meet in Kauai at the Poipu Bay Resort Golf Course. For details, call ☎ **888/744-0888** or visit **www.pga.com**.

Hawaiian Slack-Key Guitar Festival. Masters of the form, which involves a unique Hawaiian tuning, perform at the Kauai Beach Hotel and Resort for free. For additional info, call ☎ **808/239-4336** or 808/226-2697 or go to **www.hawaiianslackkeyguitarfestivals.com**.

Annual Kona Coffee Cultural Festival (all over Kailua-Kona). Harvest time in Kona is marked with coffee tasting, picking contests, the Miss Kona Coffee pageant, and other tributes to the bean. Go to **www.konacoffeefest.com**.

Big Island Festival (early Nov). Four days and nights of food, golf and other sports, spa specials, Hawaiian music, and farm exhibits on the Big Island's Gold Coast. For details, phone ☎ **877/817-0460** or 808/964-5067 or visit **www.bigislandfestival.com**.

December

First Light. So many Hollywood heavyweights spend the holidays on Maui that film studios with dreams of Oscars and Golden Globes have taken to premiering their late-in-the-year award hopefuls there, at the Maui Arts and Cultural Center in Kahului. To get more information, call ☎ **808/579-9996** or visit **www.mauifilmfestival.com**.

Old-Fashioned Holiday Celebration. Crafts, carolers, Christmas cookies, and Santa Claus are what you'll find on the second Saturday in December, under Hawaii's most famous tree at the Banyan Tree Park in Lahaina. For details, call ☎ **808/310-1117.**

Quiksilver in Memory of Eddie Aikau. A big-wave surf contest held at Waimea Bay and named in honor of a revered Hawaiian waterman lost at sea while trying to save others. The holding period for this 1-day event starts in December and runs into February. Waimea must be breaking at least 20 feet for the contest to go on—the bay calls the day, as they say. Go to **www.quicksilver.com/eddie** for specifics.

Honolulu Marathon. This is one of the world's largest marathons, with more than 30,000 runners. To sign up or learn how to be a spectator, call ☎ **808/734-7200** or go to **www.honolulumarathon.com**.

Festival of Trees. Downtown Honolulu becomes an unlikely wonderland of Christmas trees in an annual benefit for Queens Medical Center. Lighting of the tree occurs on the first or second week of December. To learn more, call ☎ **808/547-4307.**

Aloha Bowl. Pac-10 meets the Big 12 on Christmas Day in a nationally televised college classic at the Aloha Stadium in Honolulu. For details, call ☎ **808/545-7171.**

Rainbow Classic. The NCAA's best basketball teams play at the University of Hawaii's Special Events Arena in Honolulu during the week after Christmas. To get more information, call ☎ **808/965-6501.**

Whales on the Web

For background on humpbacks and the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary, visit **www.hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov**.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Be sure to check with the U.S. embassy or consulate for the very latest in entry requirements, as these continue to shift. Full information can be found at the **U.S. State Department's website** (travel.state.gov).

VISAS

As of this writing, citizens of western and central Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore need only a valid passport and a round-trip air ticket or cruise ticket to enter the United States. Canadian citizens can also enter without a visa; they simply need to show proof of residence.

Citizens of all other countries will need to obtain a tourist visa from the U.S. consulate; depending on your country of origin, there may or may not be a charge attached (and you may or may not have to apply in person). To get the visa, along with a passport valid to at least 6 months from the end of your scheduled U.S. visit, you'll need to complete an application and submit a 1½-inch-square photo. It's usually possible to obtain a visa within 24 hours, except during holiday periods or the summer rush.

For information about U.S. visas, go to http://travel.state.gov and click on "Visas."

PASSPORTS

To enter the United States, international visitors must have a valid passport that expires at least 6 months later than the scheduled end of their visit.

For Residents of Australia: You can pick up an application from your local post office or any branch of Passports Australia, but you must schedule an interview at the passport office to present your application materials. Call the **Australian Passport Information Service** (☎ 131-232), or visit the government website at www.passports.gov.au.

For Residents of Canada: Passport applications are available at travel agencies throughout Canada or from the central **Passport Office** (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G3; ☎ 800/567-6868; www.ppt.gc.ca). ***Note:*** Canadian children who travel must have their own passports. However, if you hold a valid Canadian passport issued before December 11, 2001, that bears the name of your child, the passport remains valid for you and your child until it expires.

For Residents of Ireland: You can apply for a 10-year passport at the **Passport Office** (Setanta Centre, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2; ☎ 01/671-1633; www.irlgov.ie/iveagh). Those under age 18 and over 65 must apply for a €12 3-year passport. You can also apply at 1A South Mall, Cork (☎ 021/272-525), or at most main post offices.

For Residents of New Zealand: You can pick up a passport application at any New Zealand Passports Office or download it from their website. Contact the **Passports Office** (☎ 0800/225-050 or 04/474-8100; www.passports.govt.nz).

For Residents of the United Kingdom: To pick up an application for a standard 10-year passport (5-yr. passport for children under 16), visit your nearest passport office, major post office, or travel agency or contact the **United Kingdom Passport Service** (☎ 0870/521-0410; www.ukpa.gov.uk).

MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

No inoculations or vaccinations are required to enter the United States, unless you're arriving from an area that is suffering from an epidemic (cholera or yellow fever, in particular). A valid, signed prescription is required for those travelers in need of **s**yringe-administered medications or medical treatment that involves narcotics. It is extremely important to obtain the correct documentation in these cases as your medications could be confiscated; and if you are found to be carrying an illegal substance, you could be subject to significant penalties. Those who are HIV-positive may also require a special waiver in order to enter the country (as you will be asked on your visa application whether you're a carrier of any communicable diseases). The best thing to do is contact **AIDSinfo** (☎ 800/448-0440 or 301/519-6616 or www.aidsinfo.nih.gov) for up-to-date information.

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

Strict regulations govern what can and can't be brought into the United States—and what you can take back home with you.

WHAT YOU CAN BRING INTO HAWAII

Every visitor more than 21 years of age may bring in, free of duty, the following: (1) 1 liter of wine or hard liquor; (2) 200 cigarettes, 100 cigars (but not from Cuba), or 3 pounds of smoking tobacco; and (3) $100 worth of gifts. These exemptions are offered to travelers who spend at least 72 hours in the United States and who have not claimed them within the preceding 6 months. It is altogether forbidden to bring into the country foodstuffs (particularly fruit, cooked meats, and canned goods) and plants (vegetables, seeds, tropical plants, and the like). Foreign tourists may carry in or out up to $10,000 in U.S. or foreign currency with no formalities; larger sums must be declared to U.S. Customs on entering or leaving, which includes filing form CM 4790. For details regarding U.S. Customs and Border Protection, consult your nearest U.S. embassy or consulate, or **U.S. Customs** (☎ 202/927-1770; www.customs.ustreas.gov).

WHAT YOU CAN TAKE HOME FROM HAWAII

For a clear summary of **Canadian** rules, write for the booklet *I Declare,* issued by the **Canada Border Services Agency** (☎ 800/461-9999 in Canada, or 204/983-3500; www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca).

For information, **U.K. citizens** can contact **HM Customs & Excise** (☎ 0845/010-9000 or, from outside the U.K., 020/8929-0152; www.hmce.gov.uk).

A helpful brochure for **Australians** that's available from Australian consulates or Customs offices is *Know Before You Go.* For more information, call the **Australian Customs Service** (☎ 1300/363-263; www.customs.gov.au).

Most questions regarding **New Zealand** rules are answered in a free pamphlet available at New Zealand consulates and Customs offices called *New Zealand Customs Guide for Travellers, Notice no. 4.* For more information, contact **New Zealand Customs** (The Customhouse, 17–21 Whitmore St., Box 2218, Wellington; ☎ 04/473-6099 or 0800/428-786; www.customs.govt.nz).

FINDING A GOOD AIRFARE TO HAWAII

Because Hawaii is such a wildly popular destination, discounted airfares are elusive. And if you're thinking you might cash in on your frequent-flier miles, think again—the airlines are notorious for leaving Hawaii off the list of destinations where frequent fliers can reap their rewards. There are, however, some strategies you can employ to help shave a few bucks off of your plane tickets:

- **Fly local.** The two main Hawaii-based airlines, **Aloha Airlines** and **Hawaiian Airlines,** frequently run special sales, and often beat the majors with their fares. The number of gateways they serve are limited, but in certain instances it will be less expensive to fly to one of their Western gateways—Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Oakland, Orange County, Phoenix, Sacramento, San Jose, Seattle, Reno, San Diego—and then transfer to one of their flights.
- **Fly when the business travelers are on the ground.** Those who fly midweek and midday and who stay over a Saturday night generally pay far less than those who fly at more popular times.
- **Book in the wee hours.** Sounds odd, but you can often save money by booking your seat at 3am. That's because unpaid-for reservations are flushed out of the system at midnight, and since airfares are based on supply and demand, prices often sink when the system becomes aware of an increase in supply. Consider booking on a Wednesday as well—that's the day when most airfare sales traditionally come out. Be sure to watch such sites such as **Frommers.com** and **SmarterTravel.com,** which highlight fare sales.
- **Try booking through a consolidator.** Those traveling to Hawaii from a country other than the United States may wish to use a consolidator, or "bucket shop," to snag a ticket. These companies buy tickets in bulk and pass savings along to their customers. If you reside in Europe, the best way to find one that services your area is to go to the website **www.cheapflights.co.uk**, which serves as a clearinghouse for all sorts of buckets shops, both large and small. Many will also advertise in the Sunday papers. Be careful though: Some charge outrageous change fees, so read the fine print before you purchase your

go!—New Airline Offers Low Rates In Hawaii

In June 2006, Mesa Air Group's new carrier called **go!** began operating interisland flights between Honolulu and Lihue, Kahului, Hilo, and Kailua-Kona. For more information, call ☎ 888/IFLYGO2 or go to www.iflygo.com.

ticket. Bucket shops will not be useful for those flying within the United States as they are not generally able to undercut standard pricing on domestic travel.

- **Search, search, and search some more.** Try such Web search engines as **Sidestep.com, Kayak.com,** or **Mobissimo.com,** which search airline sites directly, adding no service charges and often finding fares that the larger travel-agent sites miss.
- **Consider an air-hotel package.** Often by booking your airfare and hotel together, you'll pay less than you would if you had booked these elements separately.
- **Travel during off season.** Airfares rise and fall with demand. During Hawaii's off seasons—from mid-April to mid-June, and mid-September to mid-December (Thanksgiving excepted)—demand slackens.

BOOKING PACKAGES TO HAWAII

Because its shorelines are covered with thousands of hotel rooms needing to be filled, the Hawaiian Islands are one of the world's hot spots for travel packages, in which airfares, accommodations, vehicle rentals, and often extras like golf or luaus, are sold in discounted bundles. With a good travel package, you might save upwards of $100 per day on your vacation. The rooms in the cheapest packages aren't necessarily going to be at the better hotels, but big savings can compensate for lackluster lodgings. Even the pricey resort hotels, though, offer packages, so remember that packages aren't only a budget-traveler thing.

You can customize some travel packages, picking your dates of travel, certain hotels, rental-car makes and models, and whatnot. But the more flexible you are with travel times and accommodations, the more likely you are to land one of the best deals. Fixed packages take advantage of seasonal downtimes, have fixed dates, and have no choices among hotels. For more specifics, read the following list and take a look at p. 104 and 239.

Here are some hints to keep in mind when considering air/hotel packages:

- When an ad for a travel package says "from $500 on up," it means "from $500 on up, but not including the taxes and fees that jack the price up further." Be sure to take that into account when shopping around.
- The best-priced packages depart from the West Coast. If you live east of California, you have to factor in the added cost of getting to the West Coast.
- Packages are always based on double-occupancy rooms and flights for two. Single travelers don't automatically get the package at half the price; in fact, they usually have to pay a supplement. If you're flying solo, bear that in mind.

- Package rates can vary greatly from one day to the next, so if you find a good deal, grab it. It might be gone tomorrow.
- If you're getting travel insurance, don't get it with the travel package. Get it from an outside source (p. 441). That way, if the company you're dealing with goes under, it can't take your travel insurance with it.

THE HOW-TOS OF HOME EXCHANGES

Whether you're a homeowner or a renter, you can reap big savings on accommodations by doing a home exchange with someone who lives in Hawaii. Among the handful of home-exchange networks, **Intervac USA** (☎ 800/756-HOME; www.intervacus.com) is the oldest. Founded in 1953, it claims 10,000 members in 52 countries. A 1-year online membership starts at $78 and allows you to find potential home-swap partners, with whom you then work directly. You can go online and search for available properties, without the contact information, for free. For the less Web-savvy or more print-oriented, Intervac has a catalog, updated every 6 months, for $128 (which includes the online service as well).

Another company, **HomeLink International** (☎ 800/638-3841; www.homelink.org), claims to have the largest home-exchange registry, with 14,000 members. Like Intervac, you can browse HomeLink's listings online, minus the contact information. Web-only membership costs $80 per year, while "full" membership, with two directories, costs $125. But before committing to either Intervac or HomeLink, click on "housing swap" at **www.craigslist.com**—a free, online, global classified ads of sorts, with discussion groups. You may luck out. When doing a home swap, don't be shy about asking a potential home-swap partner for references—many home-swappers have done it before, and a third party can help you triangulate the suitability of a particular home. ***Heads Up Sin City:*** People in Hawaii are crazy for Vegas. Your chances of finding someone in Hawaii who wants to stay where you live increase exponentially if you reside in Las Vegas.

PACKING

The dress code in Hawaii is highly casual. Shorts, T-shirts, and flip-flops (or "slippers" as they're called in the islands) are acceptable in most settings. For dressier occasions, khakis and aloha shirts, and dresses or muumuus, with just about any kind of shoe, usually suffice. Aloha wear or a sports coat will do in the finest dining establishments. Most golf courses require players to wear collared shirts.

Long-sleeved shirts, sunglasses, and wide-brimmed hats are sensible for sun protection (along with regular applications of sunscreen). It can get cool in the evening; pack a light jacket, windbreaker, or sweater. Bring something in case of rain, and bring a water-resistant windbreaker if you might head out on a boat—it can get wet and windy out on the sea, especially in the late afternoon.

If you're headed into the mountains, particularly up Haleakala on Maui or Mauna Kea on the Big Island, bring warm layers. A rule of thumb in Hawaii is that temperatures drop 3 degrees for every 1,000 feet of elevation. If it's 86°F (30°C) on the beach in Kona, it might be 47°F (8°C) atop 13,796-foot Mauna Kea. Layers are definitely the way to go, as temperatures will get cooler and cooler as you go up the mountain, and warmer and warmer as you come down.

For spotting whales, dolphins, or big-wave surfers, pack binoculars. For horseback riding, pack long pants. For hiking—especially hiking on lava—bring appropriate footwear.

MONEY MATTERS

ATM machines and debit cards—which work in Hawaii just like they do everywhere else—have supplanted the need for traveler's checks. ATMs are all over the islands, with surcharges of $1.50 and up.

All car-rental companies and many hotels and condos require credit cards. By the same token, some smaller restaurants and accommodations don't accept them, so call ahead if Visa's all you've got. Out-of-state checks aren't generally accepted.

Foreign currency can be exchanged at Honolulu International Airport, at some of the larger hotels, and at banks. Banking hours are generally from 8:30am to 4:30pm Monday through Friday, with some open until 6pm on Friday, and from 9am until noon on Saturday.

What Things Cost

Groceries, gasoline, housing, and most things in general tend to cost more in Hawaii than they do on the mainland. Shipping is blamed for some costs, scarcity of land for others. Some things just seem to cost more because everything else does. In national cost-of-living surveys, Honolulu is never far from the top of the list, and imported goods on the neighbor islands are typically a bit more expensive because of the cost of shipping them from Honolulu, where they enter the state. Here's a random sampling of consumer goods on the Big Island to give you an idea of what to expect:

Cup of coffee at Ken's House of Pancakes, Hilo	$1.50
2.7-ounce tube of Colgate toothpaste	$2.39
Tampax, box of 40	$7.79
4 fluid-ounce bottle of Sensitive Eyes brand lens solution	$2.59
Huggies disposable diapers, box of 34	$14.69
Bottle of Coors at Kim's Karaoke, Hilo	$2.75
Pint of Guiness Stout at Nichol's Public House, Hilo	$5.00
Typical plate lunch in Hawaii	$6–$9
Banana Boat Sport Quik Bloc sunscreen, SPF 30	$9.99
Movie ticket	$8–$8.75
Honolulu Advertiser on Oahu	50¢
Honolulu Advertiser on neighbor islands	75¢

If You Get There & Your Luggage Doesn't . . .

You and your lost luggage stand a better chance of a speedy reunification if it's labeled with not only your home address, but also the name, address, and phone number of the place you'll be staying in Hawaii.

Airlines are required to deliver late-arriving luggage to you. It's standard for them to tell you your missing bags are on the next flight, encouraging you to wait around (when they may or may not be right). If waiting doesn't suit you, don't. The airline will deliver your bags when (and if) they arrive. But before leaving the airport, make sure to get a lost-luggage claim form, the phone number to call to check on your luggage, and an estimated time of delivery.

TIPS & TAXES

Hawaii doesn't technically have a sales tax, but it does have a 4.16% general excise tax, which is, for all intents and purposes, a sales tax. It's attached to all retail sales, including food, as well as commissions, rental income, and services. In addition, accommodations incur a 7.25% room tax, and rental cars come with a $3-per-day state surcharge, and a 35¢-per-day vehicle-registration and weight tax, as well as the general excise tax, and in most cases an Airport Concession Recovery Fee (11.11% at Honolulu International Airport, and 8.1% in Hilo, Kona, Kahului, and Molokai). It adds up fast.

In addition to factoring taxes into your budget, you need to factor in tips. Standard tips are: 15% to 20% at restaurants and bars; $1 per bag for luggage handlers; $1 to $2 per night for room maids; 15% for cabdrivers; and 10% for really good surf lessons.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Should you buy travel insurance before coming to Hawaii? Maybe, but not necessarily. Your existing insurance policies and credit cards may already cover such things as lost luggage, canceled tickets, and medical expenses. And because hotels usually allow you to cancel reservations with at least 24 hours notice, insurance isn't necessary to protect you against financial loss should you abort your trip at the last minute. However, if you're not already covered and have bought airline tickets well in advance, or you have put down a big deposit with a travel agency, you might consider **trip-cancellation insurance,** which protects you if you have to scrub a trip or if your travel agency goes belly up. You might also consider **lost-luggage insurance.** Checked baggage is covered up to $2,800 per ticketed passenger on domestic flights. On international flights, including U.S. legs of international flights, coverage is limited to about $635 per checked bag. If you're lugging valuables worth more than the standard coverage and your other insurance policies don't have a lost-luggage clause, you'd be wise to protect yourself. Also, if you're a not a U.S. citizen, you might consider **medical insurance** to cover unforeseen doctor visits, since healthcare is very expensive in the States. In general, you can expect to pay between 5% and 8% of the total cost of your vacation

on travel insurance. The website **www.insuremytrip.com** allows you to compare travel-insurance policies of the major companies, such as:

- **Access America** (☎ 866/807-3982; www.accessamerica.com)
- **Travel Guard International** (☎ 800/807-3982; www.travelguard.com)
- **CSA Travel Protection** (☎ 800/873-9844; www.csatravelprotection.com)

HEALTH & SAFETY

Many people consider Hawaii to be paradise, but even in paradise, good vacations can go bad. The Four Horsemen of the Hawaiian Vacation Apocalypse are Sunburn, Crime, Automobile Accidents, and Drowning.

SUN PROTECTION

The Hawaiian sun can be brutal, and every year hapless visitors end up in the emergency room with second-degree burns from getting too much sun too soon. First-degree burns can be treated with cool baths, moisturizers, and over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream. Aspirin may help as well. Beachgoers—and especially fair-skinned beachgoers—should wear wide-brimmed hats and use sunblock creams or lotions of at *least* SPF 15. Apply sunblock in the morning, and periodically reapply it through the day—especially between the hours of 10am and 3pm, when the sun's rays are most intense. Ultraviolet rays penetrate clouds, so don't go without sunblock just because it's cloudy. Out on the water, UV rays reflected off the sea can fry your undersides, so be sure to put sunblock under your nose, not just on top of it. Babies should be kept out of the sun. If that's impossible, protect babies with sunblock and light-colored, lightweight clothing, and always keep their little heads covered.

Volcanic Smog, aka VOG

Kilauea volcano is Hawaii's leading polluter and would be a major violator of federal clean-air standards if the EPA had any authority over it. The volcano dumps an estimated 1,000 metric tons of sulfur dioxide into the atmosphere on an average day—worse than any U.S. industrial polluter. Sulfur dioxide reacts chemically with sunlight, oxygen, dust, and water to form an acidic haze known as vog, for "volcanic smog." Vog can irritate the eyes, nose, throat, and lungs.

People with breathing problems, particularly the elderly and children with asthma, are among those most acutely affected by vog. Vog can hang in the air over all of the islands. It's especially noticeable on the west side of the Big Island, where the prevailing northeast trade winds wrap around the southern tip of the island and carry it up the Kona Coast. When the trade winds abate, Hilo, on the east side, gets the vog. The Hawaii State Department of Health operates the **Vog Index Hotline** (☎ 808/885-7143; Mon–Fri), which rates air quality on a scale of 0 to 10. The higher the number, the worse the vog.

How to Escape a Rip Current

If you get caught in a current, don't try to fight it by swimming against it. You'll just get worn out. Instead, swim perpendicular to the current's direction of flow. Eventually you'll find the edge. For example, if you find yourself getting carried away from the beach, do not try and swim toward the beach. Instead, swim parallel to the beach until you escape the current. Then head back in. Here's another way to put it: Swim across currents, not against them.

CRIME AVOIDANCE

Hawaii ranks low in violent crime but high in property crime, when compared with the other states. Much of Hawaii's property crime is driven by its problem with crystal methamphetamine—or "ice." Hawaii has one of the worst ice problems in the United States. Tourists and their rental cars are favorite targets. It's easy to let your guard down while on vacation, but you shouldn't. Hang loose, but keep an eye on your belongings, especially at the beach, where stuff gets nipped all the time. Never leave anything of value in an unattended rental car, and don't fool yourself into thinking that stuff locked in the trunk is safe. Every thief on the rental-car circuit knows about the latch in the driving compartment that unlocks the trunks of many cars, and, lacking one of those, that the trunk can be easily popped with a crowbar. To gauge the frequency of car break-ins at a particular parking area, look around the ground for broken window glass. Muggings occur occasionally, especially around Waikiki, but they're not common.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Hawaii is very much an automobile society, with way too many people driving far too fast. You may see bumper stickers that say, "Slow Down: This Ain't the Mainland," but the truth is that Hawaii drivers are as bad as drivers anywhere. The result is about 130 traffic fatalities per year. Honolulu, with its L.A.-style freeways, and the Big Island with its long, two-lane country roads, always take the grim lead in numbers. In addition, there are some 12,000 traffic-related injuries. Beware.

WATER SAFETY

Err on the side of caution in and around Hawaiian waters. Each year, about 60 people drown in Hawaii, and nearly half of them are visitors.

At the beach: Ocean conditions can be deceptive. What might look like a safe swimming area can actually be wracked by dangerous undertows or rip currents. Sneaker waves can wash you off of cliffs. If there's a lifeguard around, say hi and ask about swimming conditions before getting in the water. Hawaii lifeguards are remarkable watermen, and good people to talk to, anyway.

Along streams: When hiking along mountain streams, beware of flash flooding. After periods of sustained rain or during sudden heavy downpours, streams can swell suddenly, trapping you on the wrong side or, worse, washing you away. Check the weather forecast before striking out into the mountains.

Coral Reef Etiquette

Not only are people at risk for harm in Hawaii's marine environment, they can inadvertently inflict harm upon it. Be careful and mindful of your surroundings.

Snorkel lightly. Corals reefs are made from colonies of tiny coral polyps that dwell on the outer surface of the hard coral structures they create, one thin layer at a time, over centuries. Coral polyps are extremely sensitive. Merely laying your hands on a head of coral can transfer enough residue from your skin to screw up the delicate mucous membranes that protect the colonies from disease and parasites. Standing on coral simply crushes the coral polyps en masse. If you need to stand while snorkeling or swimming in Hawaii, find a sandy spot. If you're not a strong swimmer, consider snorkeling with a flotation device under your chest to help keep your swim fins from becoming weapons of mass coral polyp destruction. The main idea is to float horizontally on the surface; don't touch the coral.

Go easy on the turtles. You shouldn't touch them. Turtles are protected by law from harassment, and in any case, it's just not nice.

Let resting dolphins rest. When dolphins come near shore, they do so to rest after long and hard deep-water hunting trips. The impact of well-meaning visitors looking for one-on-ones with the dolphins has had a huge impact on dolphin populations in places such as Kealakekua Bay on the Big Island, where the numbers have fallen as visitor numbers have increased. The impact of humans swimming among pods of resting wild dolphins has become a big political issue in Hawaii, and the state is struggling to balance the interests of the visitor industry, which promotes the romantically appealing idea of dolphin swims, with the interests of conservationists, who are trying to promote the idea that dolphins need a good, uninterrupted day's sleep to function effectively in the wild. The dolphin-encounter issue, as a matter of public policy, has yet to be resolved. In the meantime, the sensible thing to do if you spot dolphins in the water is to play hard to get. Hold your ground, think positive thoughts, and hope for the best. Maybe you'll be blessed with a visit from the pod. If not, at least you caused no harm.

A note on drinking water: The Hawaii State Department of Health recommends that you drink 16 ounces of water per hour to avoid dehydration when out in the sun. Don't drink from mountain streams or you might get the tropical bacterial disease leptospirosis. Hawaii averages about 44 cases of the disease a year, with one suspected death in 2002. Symptoms include high fever, severe headache, chills, muscle aches, vomiting, jaundice, abdominal pain, and diarrhea—any one of which could single-handedly ruin a vacation. Tap water is safe.

SPECIALIZED TRAVEL RESOURCES

FAMILIES

Most large hotels and resorts in Hawaii have supervised children's programs, where travelers can deposit their tyke, then go off and do other things. If you're not staying at one of those places, try **People Attentive to Children (PATCH)** (www.patchhawaii.org), which can refer trained babysitters in the islands. Call them on **Oahu** at ☎ 808/839-1988; on **Maui** at ☎ 808/242-9232; on **Kauai** at ☎ 808/246-0622; and on the **Big Island** at ☎ 808/329-7101. To rent baby paraphernalia such as cribs, strollers, and playpens, check with **Baby's Away** (www.babysaway.com) on **Oahu** at ☎ 800/496-6386 or 808/222-6041; on **Maui** at ☎ 800/942-9030 or 808/875-9093; and on the **Big Island** at ☎ 800/996-9030 or 808/987-9236.

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

In general, Oahu and Maui are good on accessibility. Kauai and the Big Island have a way to go, and Molokai and Lanai have a long way to go. Accessible rental vans are available on Oahu, Kauai, Maui, and the Big Island through **Access Aloha Travel** (☎ 800/480-1143 or 808/545-1143; www.accessalohatravel.com). This company specializes in booking vacations for people with disabilities, helping with accommodations, cruise-ship trips, tours, and whatnot. Hand-controlled cars can be rented from **Avis** (☎ 800/331-1212) and **Hertz** (☎ 800/654-3131), but availability is limited, so book as far in advance as you can. Hawaii has long had a 4-month quarantine on all dogs entering the state, including seeing-eye dogs, but the rules have been modified to allow animals that have documented rabies shots and meet other state requirements to enter without delay. The specifics are available at www.hawaiiag.org/hdoa, or by calling the **Animal Quarantine Facility** (☎ 808/483-7171). For general information on traveling with a seeing-eye dog, contact the **American Foundation for the Blind** (☎ 800/232-5463; www.afb.org).

On Oahu, the therapeutic recreation unit of the **Honolulu Department of Parks and Recreation** (☎ 808/692-5750) has Landeez All-Terrain Wheelchairs available, free of charge, at the following beaches: Ala Moana Regional Park, Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve, Sans Souci Beach Park, Kualoa Regional Park, Kailua Beach Park, Fort DeRussy Beach Park, and Pokai Bay Beach Park. The **Golden Access Passport** (☎ 888/GO-PARKS; www.nationalparks.org), which gives U.S. residents with permanent disabilities 50% discounts on all federal user fees, will save you money at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park and Puuhonua o Honaunau National Historical Park on the Big Island, Haleakala National Park on Maui, and the USS *Arizona* Memorial at Pearl Harbor on Oahu.

SENIORS

Many accommodations and restaurants in Hawaii give discounts to card-carrying members of **AARP.** Just be sure to ask for the discount before they ring up the charges. The **Elderhostel Program** (11 Avenue de Lafayette, Boston, MA 020110-1746; ☎ 877/426-8056; www.elderhostel.org) has a delightful variety of opportunities for seniors to get to know Hawaii in ways not open to other visitors. The range of educational, cultural, and volunteer programs has in the past

included: scrubbing, sanding, painting, and greasing the battleship *Missouri*—The Mighty MO—in Pearl Harbor; studying astronomy and volcanology at the University of Hawaii at Hilo; and exploring historic homes and gardens on Kauai. The **Golden Age Passport** (☎ 888/GO-PARKS; www.nationalparks.org), which gives 50% discounts on all federal user fees to U.S. residents 62 and older, will save you money at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park and Puuhonua o Honaunau National Historical Park on the Big Island, Haleakala National Park on Maui, and the USS *Arizona* Memorial at Pearl Harbor on Oahu.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

Waikiki is where Hawaii's main gay and lesbian scene is, with such queer landmarks as **Hula's Bar & Lei Stand** (134 Kapahulu Ave.; ☎ 808/923-0669) and the stretch of shoreline known as **Queen's Surf Beach** (which had that name long before it went gay). The Puna District of the Big Island has been growing as a gay destination, with gay-friendly getaways such as **Kalani Eco-Resort** (☎ 808/965-7828; www.kalani.com). The **Odyssey** (www.odysseyhawaii.com) is a free gay publication available at gay-friendly spots throughout the islands. For general information, check **www.gayhawaii.com,** which has a directory of beaches, businesses, and community resources, broken down by island.

BRIDES & GROOMS

Hawaii is a fine place to tie the nuptial knot, and the state has done an uncharacteristically good job at minimizing the red tape for weddings. The main requirement, apart from a fiancé/fiancée, is a marriage license. To get one, you must fill out a marriage-license application, and you and your fiancé/fiancée, together, must hand it to a licensed marriage agent, along with $60. To locate a licensed marriage agent call:

- **Oahu:** ☎ 808/586-4544
- **Big Island:** ☎ 808/974-6008
- **Kauai:** ☎ 808/241-3498
- **Maui:** ☎ 808/984-8210
- **Molokai:** ☎ 808/553-3663
- **Lanai:** ☎ 808/565-6411

You can get the application for a marriage license from a licensed marriage agent, or you can download one at **www.hawaii.gov/health**.

There are no blood-test requirements, state residency requirements, or U.S. citizenship requirements to marry in Hawaii. There *are* gender requirements, since Hawaii hasn't legalized gay marriage (although it came close). You do have to be at least 18, unless you're 16 or 17 and have convinced your parents, legal guardians, or a family-court judge to sign consent forms, or if you're 15 and have convinced your parents or legal guardians *and* a family-court judge to sign consent forms. Regardless of your age, you need birth certificates, valid IDs or driver's licenses, and the full names, including maiden names, of your parents. The marriage license is good for 30 days throughout Hawaii.

If you'd like to use a wedding planner (many of whom are also licensed marriage agents), you can find a list of them at **www.gohawaii.com**, the website of the state's official source of tourism information, the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau. Wedding-planner charges start around $250 and go way up. If your need for a wedding planner is too urgent to shop around, try: on Oahu, **Aloha Wedding Planners** (☎ 800/288-8309 or 808/943-2711); on Maui, **A Paradise Dream Wedding** (☎ 888/286-5979 or 808/875-9503); on Kauai, **Coconut Coast Weddings and Photography** (☎ 800/585-5595 or 808/826-5557); and on the Big Island, **Paradise Weddings Hawaii** (☎ 800/428-5844 or 808/883-9067).

If you'd like to bypass the wedding planner and make your own arrangements before you arrive, the **www.gohawaii.com** website lists facilities and venues, caterers, florists, formal wear, photographers and videographers, and limousines, as well as wedding performers. You'll find only the members of the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau listed there, but that includes just about everybody in Hawaii's wedding industry, so it's a pretty complete. For an even more in-depth list—or say, if you absolutely must have tom yum soup at the reception—go to **www.superpages.com**, where you can pull up everything from florists in Hilo to Thai caterers in Honolulu.

PETS

At one time, all dogs and cats entering the islands, including seeing-eye dogs, had to go through an onerous 4-month quarantine, an eternity in dog years. Nowadays, dogs and cats can get around hard time in quarantine by having documented rabies shots and meeting other state requirements, all of which are spelled out at **www.hawaiiag.org/hdoa,** or by contacting the **Animal Quarantine Facility** (☎ 808/483-7171).

STAYING WIRED (OR WIRELESS) WHILE AWAY

Many hotels in Hawaii have Internet access and some have Wi-Fi. Honolulu is the Wi-Fi capital of the islands, but you won't find it as widely available as it is in comparably sized mainland cities. Wi-Fi hotspots are still scarce on the neighbor islands, although the **Starbucks** and the **Borders** throughout the state serve as Wi-Fi sites for **T-Mobile** (www.t-mobile.com), which offers 7 days of broadband Internet access for $20. If you're not lugging a laptop, your best bet for online access is among the multitude of Internet cafes found everywhere on all islands.

RECOMMENDED READING

If you're a bibliophile, like me, you probably abhor the idea of going someplace you've never been without reading up on it first. Any one of the readings from the abbreviated but carefully selected bibliography we offer here will illuminate Hawaii for travelers. You can find these books at bookstores and some gift shops in the islands, and you stand a good chance of finding them off-island through **www.amazon.com** or **www.powells.com**.

- ***'Olelo No'eau: Hawaiian Proverbs & Poetical Sayings,*** by Mary Kawena Pukui (who's full name is Mary Abigail Kawena ula-oka-lani-a-Hi'iaka-i-ka-poli-o-Pele-ka-wahine-'ai-honua Na-lei-lehua-a-Pele Wiggin Pukui). This

Online Resources

www.hawaii.gov State website; includes a greeting from the governor, details on getting married, online camping permits, hiking, and vacation planning.

www.gohawaii.com The state's official tourism site, where the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau has a fairly thorough listing of events, activities, tours, lodging, and wedding and honeymoon resources.

www.visitmaui.com Maui County Visitors Bureau, including Lanai and Molokai.

www.visit-oahu.com Oahu Visitors Bureau.

www.kauaidiscovery.com Kauai Visitors Bureau.

www.kauai-hawaii.com Kauai County's website, with lots of resources for visitors.

www.molokai-hawaii.com Lists happenings, accommodations, activities, and so forth on Molokai.

www.alternative-hawaii.com Fairly comprehensive listing of activities, events, and so forth with very brief descriptions and an attempted emphasis on eco-tourism.

www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/pages/SRF.php Provides the National Weather Service surf forecast.

www.nws.noaa.gov National Weather Service weather forecasts.

www.hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov Offers information on humpback whales and the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary.

http://hawaiianlanguage.com Basic online language lessons, pronunciation and common mispronunciations, the meaning of aloha, and so on.

www.hawaii-nation.org Lots of background on the movement to return Hawaii to an independent nation.

www.honoluluadvertiser.com Daily news from the state's largest newspaper.

extensive collection of Hawaiian proverbs offers unmatched insight into the wisdom, concerns, and lyrical cast of mind of the ancient Hawaiians. Illustrated by Dietrich Varez.

www.star-bulletin.com Daily news from the state's second-largest daily newspaper.

www.honoluluweekly.com Oahu's alternative weekly newspaper, with up-to-date guide to arts, entertainment, and happenings.

www.ilind.net Retired Honolulu investigative reporter Ian Lind offers insightful commentary on local media and politics, and lots of photos of his cats.

www.mauinews.com Maui's daily newspaper.

www.mauitime.com Maui's alternative weekly newspaper, with the latest on Valley Isle arts, entertainment, and happenings.

www.westhawaiitoday.com West Hawaii's daily newspaper.

www.hawaiitribune-herald.com East Hawaii's daily newspaper.

www.hawaiiislandjournal.com The Big Island's alternative newspaper, with calendar of island events and happenings.

www.kauaiworld.com Kauai's daily newspaper, the *Garden Island*.

www.nps.gov/havo Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.

http://hvo.wr.usgs.gov U.S. Geological Survey Hawaiian Volcano Observatory site, with eruption updates, current hazards, history, and links to other volcano observatories.

http://hvo.wr.usgs.gov/cam Live panorama of Pu'u O'o vent, from webcam mounted on the rim of Kilauea volcano's very active crater.

www.cfht.hawaii.edu/misc/summitview.html Webcam on summit of Mauna Kea, mounted on dome of the Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope, pointed at Gemini Observatory.

http://cfht.hawaii.edu/webcam/cfhtdome.html Webcam on summit of Mauna Kea, mounted on Gemini Observatory, pointed at Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope.

- ***Hawaiian Antiquities,*** by David Malo. Born on the Big Island in 1795 and raised among chiefs, priests, artisans, and scholars in the court of King Kamehameha, Malo wrote one of the few primary sources on the ancient beliefs and practices of Hawaiians.

- ***Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen,*** by Queen Liliuokalani. Queen Liliuokalani, the last Hawaiian monarch, who was deposed by a band of mostly white subjects, explains what happened in a Victorian style that can put off some 21st-century readers but will tear your heart out if you stick with it.
- ***To Steal a Kingdom,*** by Michael Dougherty. Presents carefully researched profiles of major players in post-Cookian Hawaiian history—monarchs, missionaries, businessmen, and even literary characters such as Herman Melville—and fits them into the currents of change that ultimately led to the overthrow of Queen Liliuokalani.
- ***Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaii Islands,*** by Gavan Daws. Fills in the details between the arrival of Captain Cook in 1777 and the arrival of statehood in 1959.
- ***A World Between Waves,*** edited by Frank Stewart. Writings on Hawaii's rich natural history by Peter Matthiessen, Diane Ackerman, James D. Houston, Maxine Hong Kingston, John McPhee, W. S. Merwin, Gavan Daws, Victoria Nelson, Kenneth Brower, Pamela Frierson, John L Culliney, Kenneth S. Norris, and Thomas Farber.
- ***da word,*** by Lee Tonouchi (aka "Da Pidgin Guerilla"). A collection of short stories, written entirely in pidgin English (aka Hawaiian Creole English, or the Hawaiian Ebonics) by pidgin's leading academic proponent.
- ***Roadside Geology of Hawaii,*** by Richard W. Hazlett and Donald W. Hyndman. Illuminates the landscape in astounding and easily accessible ways.
- ***Kilauea: The Newest Land on Earth,*** by Christina Heliker. A geologist with the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory covers the history of the volcano, richly illustrated with the work of photographer Dorian Weisel.

The ABCs of Hawaii

AAA Hawaii's only **American Automobile Association** (AAA) office is at 1130 N. Nimitz, Suite A-170, in Honolulu (☎ **808/593-2221**). Some car-rental agencies now provide auto-club-type services, so you should inquire about their availability when you rent your car.

American Express For 24-hour traveler's-check refunds and purchase information, call ☎ **800/221-7282.**

Area Code All the Hawaiian Islands are in the **808** area code. Note that if you're calling one island from another, you'll have to dial 1-808 first.

Business Hours Most offices are open Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm. Bank hours are Monday through Thursday from 8:30am to 3pm and Friday from 8:30am to 6pm; some banks are open on Saturday as well. Shopping centers are open Monday through Friday from 10am to 9pm, Saturday 10am to 5:30pm, and Sunday from noon to 5 or 6pm.

Electricity The United States uses 110–120 volts AC (60 cycles), compared to 220–240 volts AC (50 cycles), the standard in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. Adapters to use with appliances from these nations are difficult to find in Hawaii. Bring adapters with you if you're traveling from outside the U.S. with small appliances.

Emergencies Dial ☎ **911** for police, fire, or ambulance.

Liquor Laws The legal drinking age in Hawaii is 21. Bars are allowed to stay open daily until 2am; places with cabaret licenses are able to keep the booze flowing

until 4am. Grocery and convenience stores are allowed to sell beer, wine, and liquor 7 days a week.

Smoking It's against the law to smoke in public buildings, including airports, grocery stores, retail shops, movie theaters, banks, and all government buildings and facilities. There is no smoking in restaurants, and only Kauai allows smoking in bars. Most bed-and-breakfasts prohibit smoking indoors.

Taxes Hawaii's sales tax is 4%. The hotel-occupancy tax is 7.25%, and hoteliers are allowed by the state to tack on an additional 0.1666% excise tax. Thus, expect taxes of about 11.42% to be added to your hotel bill.

Time Zone Hawaii is 2 hours behind Pacific Standard Time and 5 hours behind Eastern Standard Time. In other words, when it's noon in Hawaii, it's 2pm in California and 5pm in New York during standard time on the mainland. There's no daylight saving time here, so when daylight saving time is in effect on the mainland, Hawaii is 3 hours behind the West Coast and 6 hours behind the East Coast; in summer, when it's noon in Hawaii, it's 3pm in California and 6pm in New York.

Hawaii is east of the International Date Line, putting it on the same day as the U.S. mainland and Canada, and a day behind Australia, New Zealand, and Asia.

9 Hawaiian Terms & Phrases

The Hawaiian alphabet, created by missionaries in the early 19th century as they tried to capture a nonwritten language in print, consists of just 12 letters: a, e, i, o, u, h, k, l, m, n, p, and w.

The following is a very general guide to Hawaiian pronunciation:

a — ah, as in far: hale
e — ay, as in way: nene
i — ee, as in see: pali
o — oh, as in no: taro
u — as in moon: kapu

As you explore the islands, you'll probably encounter some common Hawaiian words and sayings. Here's a brief list of some local lingo, organized alphabetically:

ahi Hawaiian tuna fish, especially the yellowfin tuna
ahupua'a land division usually extending from uplands to the sea
aina land, earth
akamai smart, clever
alii chief, chieftess, king, queen, noble; royal, kingly; to rule or act as chief
aloha love, mercy, compassion, pity; greeting; loved one; to love; to greet, hail; greetings; good-bye
anuenue rainbow
aole no, not; to have none
apu coconut shell cup
aua stingy
ewa crooked, out of shape, imperfect; place name for area west of Honolulu, used as a directional term
hahalua manta ray
haiku flower
hailepo sting ray
hala the pandanus or screw pine
halau long house, as for canoes or hula instruction
Hale house, building; to have a house
hale pili house thatched with pili grass
hale pule church, chapel
haleu toilet paper; to wipe, as with toilet paper
hana hou to do again, repeat; encore
hanai foster child, adopted child
haole white person; formerly any foreigner; introduced, of foreign origin
hapa portion, fragment, part; person of mixed blood

hapa haole part white person; of part-white blood; part white and part Hawaiian, as an individual or phenomenon

hapai to carry, lift, raise; pregnant

hau kea snow

haupia pudding made from coconut cream, formerly thickened with arrowroot, now usually with cornstarch

heiau pre-Christian place of worship, temple

hele to go, come, walk; to move, as in a game; going, moving

hele loa to go or come far; to go permanently

hele mai come

hele wale to go naked; to go without fixed purpose

hepa idiot

hihimanu various sting rays and eagle rays; lavish, magnificent, elegant

hoa hele traveling companion, fellow traveler

holo hele to run here and there

holoholo to go for a walk, ride, or sail; to go out on pleasure

honu general name for the turtle

honu'ea hawksbill turtle

ho'o-haole to act like a white person, to ape the white people, or assume airs of superiority

hooilo winter, rainy season

hui club, association, firm, partnership, union; to form a society or organization; to meet

hukilau seine; to fish with a seine

hula Hawaiian form of dance

iwi bone; shell, as of coconut, candlenut, gourd, egg, shellfish

iwi po'o skull

kahu honored attendant, guardian, keeper, administrator, pastor of a church; one who has a dog, cat, or any pet

kahuna priest, minister, sorcerer, expert in any profession

kai sea, seawater

kamaaina native born

kanaka human being, man, human, mankind, person, individual, subject, as of a chief; Hawaiian

kane male, husband, male sweetheart, man

kapakahi one-sided, crooked, lopsided; biased

kapu taboo, prohibition; sacred, holy, consecrated

kau summer

keiki child, offspring

koa brave, fearless; soldier; an endemic forest tree, the largest and most valued of the native trees

koko blood; rainbow-hued

kumu bottom, base, foundation; teacher

lau leaf

laulau wrapping, wrapped package; individual servings of pork or beef, salted fish, and taro tops, wrapped in ti leaves or banana leaves, and baked in a ground oven, steamed, or broiled

lei garland, wreath; necklace of flowers, leaves, shells, ivory, feathers, or paper; any ornament worn around the neck

limu general name for all kinds of plants living underwater

loa distance, length, height; distant, long, far, permanent

lolo feeble minded

lomilomi kneaded, worked until softened; in cuisine, raw fish is softened through the use of an acidic marinade, like ceviche

lua hole, pit, grave, den, cave, mine, crater; toilet

luakini large heiau where ruling chiefs prayed and human sacrifices were offered

luau young taro tops, especially baked with coconut cream and chicken or octopus; Hawaiian feast

mahalo thanks, gratitude, to thank

mahimahi broad-headed game fish called dolphin

maile a native twining shrub, with tiny fragrant leaves, a favorite for decorations and lei

makahiki ancient festival beginning about the middle of October and lasting about 4 months, with sports and religious festivities and kapu on war

Makahiki Hou New Year (Hau'oli Makahiki Hou: Happy New Year)

makai toward the sea, in the direction of the sea (see mauka)

make to die, defeated, death

malama to take care of, care for, preserve, fidelity, loyalty

malihini stranger, newcomer, guest, one unfamiliar with a place or custom

mana supernatural or divine power

manini small, stripped sturgeon fish; stingy

maoli native, indigenous, genuine, true, real

mauka inland

Menehune legendary race of small people, who worked at night building fishponds, roads, temples

nalu wave, surf, full of waves

noni Indiana mulberry, a small tree or shrub formerly useful to Hawaiians as a source of dyes, food, and medicine

nui big, large, great, important

ohana family

oheo a small, native shrub, in the cranberry family, bearing small, red or yellow edible berries

ono delicious, tasty, savory

opala trash, rubbish

opu belly, stomach, abdomen

pali cliff, steep hill

pau finished, over, completed, all done

Pele lava flow, volcano eruption; the volcano goddess

piko navel, umbilical cord, genitals; summit of a hill or mountain, crown of the head, ear tip, end of a rope

pipi beef, cattle

poi the Hawaiian staff of life, made from cooked taro corms

pono goodness, morality, moral qualities, correct or proper procedure; right, just, fair

puka hole
pule prayer, church service, to pray
pupu relish, snack, hors d'oeuvre
umi umi whiskers, beard
wahine woman, lady, wife, female, feminine
wai water or liquid of any kind, other than sea water
wiki, wikiwiki to hurry, hasten; quick

Source: *New Pocket Hawaiian Dictionary,* Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel H. Elbert (University of Hawaii Press).

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